This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

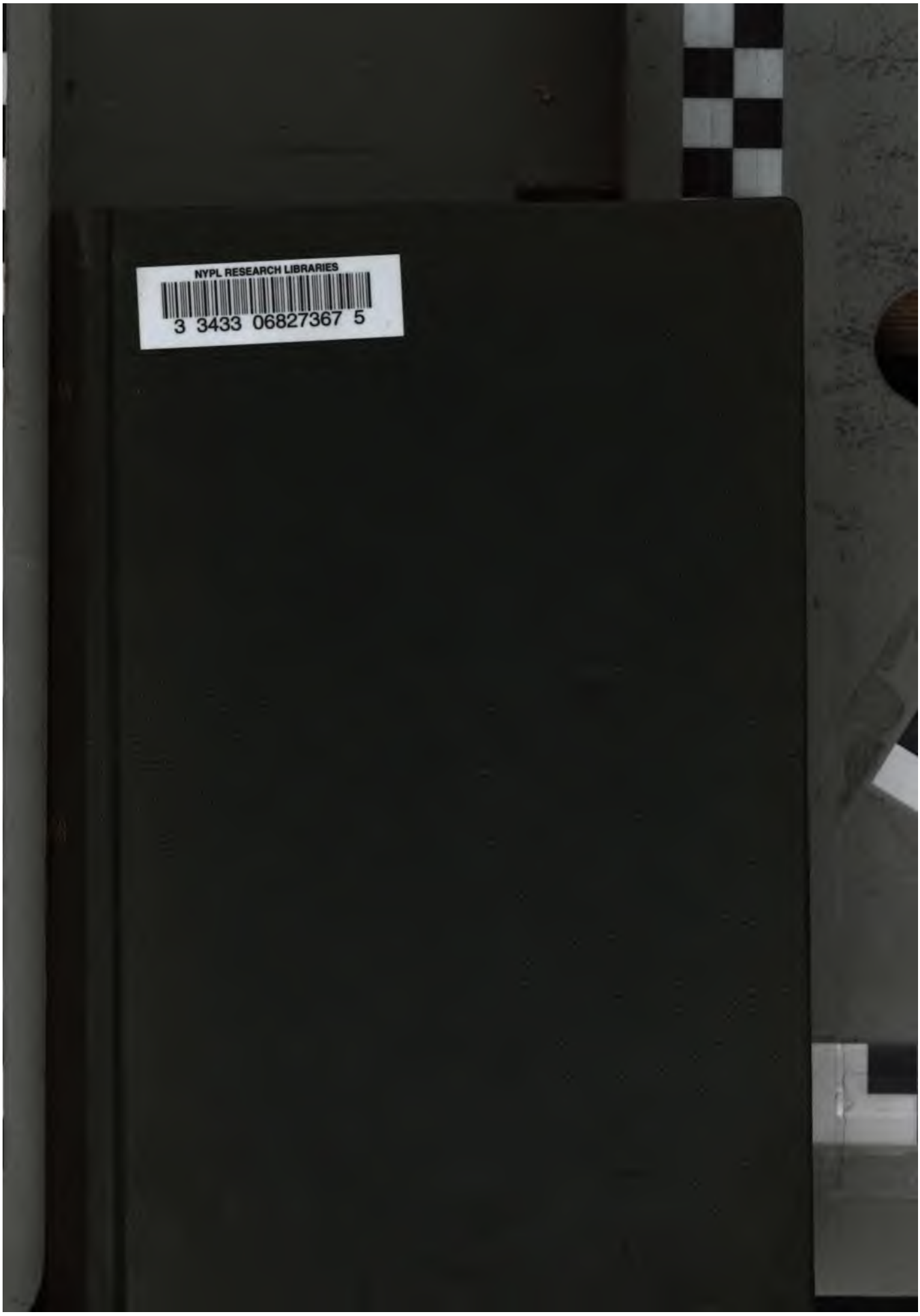
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 06827367 5

THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED AND REVISED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

DURING THE YEAR 1880.

VOL. XXVI.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

London:
PASSMORE & ALABASTER, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.
1881.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
810221
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1916 L

LONDON:
PASSMORE, ALABASTER, AND SONS, STEAM PRINTERS,
FANN STREET, ALDERSGATE STREET, E.C.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE

FREE GRACE OF GOD

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

No.		Page
1,511	**Questions which Ought to be Asked**	1
	"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?"—Job xxxv. 10, 11.	
1,512	**Loyal to the Core**	5
	"And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."—2 Samuel xv. 21.	
1,513	**Cheer up, My Comrades**	13
	"And Josiah set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord."—2 Chronicles xxxv. 2.	
1,514	**The Key-note of a Choice Sonnet**	25
	"My soul doth magnify the Lord."—Luke i. 46.	
1,515	**A Woman of a Sorrowful Spirit**	37
	"Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit."—1 Samuel i. 15.	
1,516	**Salvation by Knowing the Truth**	49
	"God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—1 Timothy ii. 3, 4.	
1,517	**For the Candid and Thoughtful**	61
	"And when Jesus saw" ["saw him," so it should be] "that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—Mark xii. 34.	
1,518	**Beloved, and yet Afflicted**	73
	"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."—John xi. 3.	
1,519	**At School**	77
	"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God."—Psalm cxliii. 10.	

No. Page

1,520 Pressing Questions of an Awakened Mind 85

"Who art thou, Lord? . . . . . What wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts ix. 5, 6.

1,521 A Plain Answer to an Important Enquiry 93

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—John vi. 29.

1,522 Expected Proof of Professed Love 101

"Shew ye the proof of your love."—2 Corinthians viii. 24.

1,523 The Royal Prerogative 109

"He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."—Psalm lxviii. 20, 21.

1,524 Your Personal Salvation 121

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Peter i. 9—12.

"Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word."—Psalm cxix. 41.

1,525 The Lily among Thorns 133

"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."—Solomon's Song ii. 2.

1,526 The Fair Portrait of a Saint 145

"My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."—Job xxiii. 11, 12.

1,527 Perfect Sanctification 157

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."—Hebrews x. 10.

1,528 "They were tempted" 169

"They were tempted."—Hebrews xi. 37.

1,529 A Powerful Reason for Coming to Christ 181

"A great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him."—Mark iii. 8.

No. Page

1,530 Following the Risen Christ 193

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."—Colossians iii. 1, 2.

1,531 On whose Side are You? 205

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me."—Exodus xxxii. 26.

1,532 The Holy Spirit's Intercession 217

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—Romans viii. 26, 27.

1,533 Fear not 229

"Fear not."—Revelation i. 17.

1,534 Salvation by Works, a Criminal Doctrine 241

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—Galatians ii. 21.

1,535 Christ's Universal Kingdom, and how it cometh ... 253

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."—Psalm ii. 8, 9.

1,536 Sentence of Death, the Death of Self-Trust 265

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."—2 Corinthians i. 9.

1,537 Samuel: an Example of Intercession 277

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way."—1 Samuel xii. 23.

1,538 Divine Surprises 289

"When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence."—Isaiah lxiv. 3.

1,539 "The Disciple whom Jesus Loved" 301

"The disciple whom Jesus loved; who also leaned on his breast at supper."—John xxi. 20.

1,540 The Mediator,—Judge and Saviour 313

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."—Acts x. 42, 43.

No. Page

1,541 Unprofitable Servants 325

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matthew xxv. 30.

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."—Luke xvii. 10.

"His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant."—Matthew xxv. 21.

1,542 Free Grace a Motive for Free Giving 337

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."—2 Thessalonians ii. 16, 17.

1,543 The Sheep before the Shearers 349

"As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."—Isaiah liii. 7.

1,544 Mahanaim, or Hosts of Angels 361

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."—Genesis xxxii. 1 2.

"And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness."—2 Samuel xvii. 27—29.

1,545 God Glorified by Children's Mouths 373

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."—Psalm viii. 2.

1,546 Men Bewitched 385

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"—Galatians iii. 1.

1,547 Samuel and the Young Man Saul 393

"And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."—1 Samuel ix. 27.

1,548 John and Herod 401

"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."—Mark vi. 20.

No.		Page.
1,549	**Good News for Thirsty Souls** ... ... "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."—Revelation xxi. 6.	409
1,550	**The Gift Unspeakable** ... ... "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 Cor. ix. 15.	421
1,551	**To-day! To-day! To-day!** ... ... "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."—Psalm xcv. 7, 8.	433
1,552	**The Friends of Jesus** ... ... "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John xv. 14.	445
1,553	**Faith Working by Love** ... ... "Faith which worketh by love."—Galatians v. 6.	457
1,554	**Redemption by Price** ... ... "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price."—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.	469
1,555	**The Glories of Forgiving Grace** ... ... "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—Ephesians i. 7.	481
1,556	**The Waterpots at Cana** ... ... "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."—John ii. 7.	493
1,557	**Walking Humbly with God** ... ... "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—Micah vi. 8.	505
1,558	**Rare Fruit** .. .. "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace."—Isaiah lvii. 19.	517
1,559	**Tokens for Good** ... ... "Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me."—Psalm lxxxvi. 17.	529
1,560	**The Plain Man's Pathway to Peace** ... ... "And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."—Matthew ix. 27—30.	541

No. Page

1,561 Asleep and yet Awake.—A Riddle 553

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."—Solomon's Song v. 2.

1,562 Harvest Past, Summer Ended, and Men Unsaved ... 565

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—Jeremiah viii. 20.

1,563 The Duty of the Present Hour 577

"Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."—Hosea x. 12.

1,564 Desires towards God: a Sermon for the Weak 589

"Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee."—Psalm xxxviii. 9.

1,565 Maschil of Ethan 601

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."—Psalm lxxxix. 1, 2.

1,566 Cheer for the Worker, and Hope for London 613

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."—Acts xviii. 9, 10.

1,567 The Blood of the Testament 625

"This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."—Hebrews ix. 20.

1,568 The Believer Catechized 637

"Believest thou this?"—John xi. 26.

1,569 The Golden Lamp and its Goodly Lessons 649

"And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

"And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then, said he, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."—Zechariah iv. 1—3; 12—14.

No. Page

1,570 The Lamentations of Jesus 661

"When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."—Luke xix. 41.

1,571 The Joy of Jesus 673

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."—Luke x. 21, 22.

1,572 Alive 685

"The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live."—Psalm cxix. 144.

1,573 Bad Lodgers, and How to Treat Them 697

"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—Jeremiah iv. 14.

1,574 I was before 709

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"—1 Timothy i. 13.

INDEX OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS.

VOLUME XXVI.

GENESIS.

Chap. & Verse	Page
xxxii. 1, 2	361

EXODUS.

xxxii. 26	205

I. SAMUEL.

i. 15	37
ix. 27	393
xii. 23	277

II. SAMUEL.

xv. 21	5
xvii. 27—29	361

II. CHRONICLES.

xxxv. 2	13

JOB.

xxiii. 11, 12	145
xxxv. 10, 11	1

PSALMS.

ii. 8, 9	253
viii. 2	373
xxxviii. 9	589
lxviii. 20, 21	109
lxxxvi. 17	529
lxxxix. 1, 2	601
xcv. 7, 8	433
cxix. 41	121
cxix. 144	685
cxliii. 10	77

SOLOMON'S SONG.

ii. 2	133
v. 2	553

ISAIAH.

liii. 7	349
lvii. 19	517
lxiv. 3	289

JEREMIAH.

iv. 14	697
viii. 20	565

HOSEA.

x. 12	577

MICAH.

vi. 8	505

ZECHARIAH.

iv. 1—3; 12—14	649

MATTHEW.

ix. 27—30	541
xxv. 21	325
xxv. 30	325

MARK.

Chap. & Verse.	Page
iii. 8	181
vi. 20	401
xii. 34	61

LUKE.

i. 46	25
x. 21, 22	673
xvii. 10	325
xix. 41	661

JOHN.

ii. 7	493
vi. 29	93
xi. 3	73
xi. 26	637
xv. 14	445
xxi. 20	301

ACTS.

ix. 5, 6	85
x. 42, 43	313
xviii. 9, 10	613

ROMANS.

viii. 26, 27	217

I. CORINTHIANS.

vi. 19, 20	469

II. CORINTHIANS.

i. 9	265
viii. 24	101
ix. 15	421

GALATIANS.

ii. 21	241
iii. 1	385
v. 6	457

EPHESIANS.

i. 7	481

COLOSSIANS.

iii. 1, 2	193

II. THESSALONIANS.

ii. 16, 17	337

I. TIMOTHY.

i. 13	709
ii. 3, 4	49

HEBREWS.

ix. 20	625
x. 10	157
xi. 37	169

I. PETER.

i. 9—12	121

REVELATION.

i. 17	229
xxi. 6	409

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

QUESTIONS WHICH OUGHT TO BE ASKED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(This was followed by a farewell address from his son, Thomas Spurgeon.)

"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?"—Job xxxv. 10, 11.

ELIHU perceived the great ones of the earth oppressing the needy, and he traced their domineering tyranny to their forgetfulness of God: "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" Surely, had they thought of God they could not have acted so unjustly. Worse still, if I understand Elihu aright, he complained that even among the oppressed there was the same departure in heart from the Lord: they cried out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but unhappily they did not cry unto God their Maker, though he waits to be gracious unto all such, and executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Both with great and small, with oppressors and oppressed, there is one common fault in our nature, which is described by the apostle in the Romans, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Until divine grace comes in and changes our nature there is none that saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" This is a very grave fault, about which we shall speak for a few minutes, and may the Holy Ghost bless the word.

I. And first, LET US THINK OVER THESE NEGLECTED QUESTIONS, beginning with "Where is God my Maker?" There are four questions in the text, each of which reminds us of the folly of forgetting it. First, *Where is God?* Above all things in the world we ought to think of him. Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man"; but it is far more true that the proper study of mankind is God. Let man study man in the second place, but God first. It is a sad thing that God is all in all, that we owe everything to him, and are under allegiance to him, and yet we neglect him. Some men think of every person but God. They have a place for everything else, but no place in their heart for God. They are most exact in the discharge of other relative duties, and yet they forget their God. They would count themselves mean indeed if

they did not pay every man his own, and yet they rob God. They rob him of his honour, to which they never give a thought; they rob him of obedience, for his law has no hold on them; they rob him of his praise, for they are receiving daily at his hands, and yet they yield no gratitude to their great Benefactor. "None saith, Where is God?" My dear hearer, do you stand convicted of this? Have you been walking up and down in this great house, and never asked to see the King whose palace it is? Have you been rejoicing at this great feast, and have you never asked to see your Host? Have you gone abroad through the various fields of nature, and have you never wished to know him whose breath perfumes the flowers, whose pencil paints the clouds, whose smile makes sunlight, and whose frown is storm. Oh, it is a strange, sad fact —God so near us, and so necessary to us, and yet not sought for!

The next point is, "None saith, Where is God *my Maker?*" Oh! unthinking man, God made you. He fashioned your curious framework, and put every bone into its place. He, as with needlework, embroidered each nerve, and vein, and sinew. He made this curious harp of twice ten thousand strings: wonderful it is that it has kept in tune so long: but only he could have maintained its harmony. He is your Maker. You are a mass of dust, and you would crumble back to dust at this moment if he withdrew his preserving power: he but speaks, and you dissolve into the earth on which you tread. Do you never think of your Maker? Have you no thought for him without whom you could not think at all? Oh, strange perversity and insanity that a man should find himself thus curiously made, and bearing within his own body that which will make him either a madman or a worshipper; and yet for all that he lives as if he had nothing to do with his Creator— "None saith, Where is God my Maker?"

There is great force in the next sentence: "*Who giveth songs in the night.*" That is to say, God is our *Comforter*. Beloved friends, you that know God, I am sure you will bear witness that, though you have had very severe trials, you have always been sustained in them when God has been near you. Some of us have been sick—nigh unto death, but we have almost loved our suffering chamber, and scarce wished to come out of it, so bright has the room become with the presence of God. Some of us here have known what it is to bury our dearest friends, and others have been short of bread, and forced to look up each morning for your daily manna; but when your heavenly Father has been with you—speak, ye children of God—have you not had joy and rejoicing, and light in your dwellings? When the night has been very dark, yet the fiery pillar has set the desert on a glow. No groans have made night hideous, but you have sung like nightingales amid the blackest shades when God has been with you. I can hardly tell you what joy, what confidence, what inward peace the presence of God gives to a man. It will make him bear and dare, rest and wrestle, yield and yet conquer, die and yet live. It will be very sad, therefore, if we poor sufferers forget our God, our Comforter, our song-giver.

Two little boys were once speaking together about Elijah riding to heaven in the chariot of fire. One of them said, "I think he had plenty of courage. I should have been afraid to ride in such a carriage as that." "Ah!" said the other, "but I would not mind if God drove it."

So do Christians say. They mind not if they are called to mount a chariot of fire if God drives it. We speak as honest men what we do know and feel, and we tell all our fellow-men that as long as God is present with us we have no choice of what happens to us, whether we sorrow or whether we rejoice. We have learned to glory in tribulations also when God's own presence cheers our souls. Why do not they also seek to know the Giver of songs?

And then there is a fourth point. "None saith, Where is God my Maker, who *teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?*" Here we are reminded that God is our *Instructor*. God has given us intellect; it is not by accident, but by his gift, that we are distinguished from the beasts and the fowls. Now, if animals do not turn to God we do not wonder, but shall man forget? Strange to say, there has been no rebellion against God among the beasts or the birds. The beasts obey their God, and bow their necks to man. There are no sin-loving cattle or apostate fowls, but there are fallen men. Think, O man, it may have been better for thee if thou hadst been made a frog or a toad than to have lived a man if thou shouldst live and die without making peace with thy Maker. Thou gloriest that thou art not a beast: take heed that the beast do not condemn thee. Thou thinkest thyself vastly better than the sparrow which lights upon thy dwelling: take heed that thou do better and rise to nobler things. Methinks if there were a choice in birds, and souls dwelt in them, their minstrelsy would be as pure as now it is: they would scorn to sing loose and frivolous songs, as men do, but they would carol everlastingly sweet psalms of praise to God. Methinks if there were souls in any of the creatures, they would devote themselves to God. as surely as angels do. Why then, O man, why is it that thou with thy superior endowments must needs be the sole rebel, the only creature of earthly mould that forgets the creating and instructing Lord?

Four points are then before us. Man does not ask after his God, his Maker, his Comforter, his Instructor: is he not filled with a fourfold madness? How can he excuse himself?

II. Supposing you do not ask these questions, let me remind you that THERE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH GOD WILL ASK OF YOU.

When Adam had broken God's command he did not say, "Where is God my Maker?" but the Lord did not therefore leave him alone. No, the Lord came out, and a voice, silvery with grace, but yet terrible with justice, rang through the trees, "Adam, where art thou?" There will come such a voice to you who have neglected God. Your Judge will enquire, "Where art thou?" Though you hide in the top of Carmel, or dive with the crooked serpent into the depths of the sea, you will hear that voice, and you will be constrained to answer it. Your dust long scattered to the wind will come together, and your soul will enter into your body, and you will be obliged to answer, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Then you will hear the second question, "Why didst thou live and die without me?" And such questions as these will come thick upon you, "What did I do that thou shouldst slight me? Did I not give you innumerable mercies? Why did you never think of me? Did I not put salvation before you? Did I not plead with you? Did I not entreat you to turn unto me? Why did you refuse me?" You will have no answer

to those questions: and then there will come another question—ah! h I wish it would come to you while there is time to answer it—"H shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" To-night I put it you that you may propose a way of escape, if your imagination is equ to the task. You will be baffled even in trying to invent an esca *now*, and how much more when your time of judgment really comes If you neglect the salvation of God in Christ you cannot be saved. I the next world, how will you answer that question—"How shall w escape?" You will ask the rocks to hide you, but they will refuse you that dread indulgence. You will beseech them to crush you, that you may no longer see the terrible face of the King upon the throne, but even that shall be denied you. Oh, be wise, and ere you dare the wrath of the King eternal and dash upon the bosses of his buckler, turn and repent, for why will ye die?

III. Now, if any seek an answer to the grave enquiries of the text, and do sincerely ask, "Where is God my Maker?" let us GIVE THE ANSWERS. Where is *God?* He is everywhere. He is all around you now. If you want him, here he is. He waits to be gracious to you. Where is God your *Maker?* He is within eye-sight of you. You cannot see him, but *he* sees *you*. He reads each thought and every motion of your spirit, and records it too. He is within ear-shot of you. Speak, and he will hear you. Ay, whisper—nay, you need not even form the words with the lips, but let the thought be in the soul, and he is so near you—for in him you live and move and have your being—that he will know your heart before you know it yourself. Where is your *Comforter?* He is ready with his "songs in the night." Where is your *Instructor?* He waits to make you wise unto salvation.

"Where, then, may I meet him?" says one. You cannot meet him —you must not attempt it—except through the Mediator. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." If you come to Jesus you have come to God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," which word we preach. Believe in Jesus Christ, and your God is with you. Trust your soul with Jesus Christ, and you have found your Creator, and you shall never again have to say, "Where is God my Maker?" for you shall live in him, and he shall live in you. You have found your Comforter and you shall joy in him, while he shall joy in you. You have also in Christ Jesus found your Instructor, who shall guide you through life, and bring you to perfection in yon bright world above.

May the Holy Ghost use this little sermon as a short sword to slay your indifference; for Christ's sake.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms xlii., liii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—550, 711, 606, 522.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LOYAL TO THE CORE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."—2 Samuel xv. 21.

ALTHOUGH the courage of David appears to have failed him when he fled from his son Absalom, yet certain other noble characteristics came out in brilliant relief, and, among the rest, his large-heartedness and his thoughtfulness for others. A man in such a desperate condition as he was must have earnestly coveted many friends and have been anxious to retain them all, but yet he would not exact their services if they were too costly to themselves, and so he said to Ittai, who appears to have been a Philistine—a proselyte to Israel, who had lately come to join himself to David—"Wherefore goest thou also with us? Thou hast newly come to me, and should I make thee wander with me in my sorrows? Return to thy place and abide with the new king, for thou art a stranger and an exile. May every blessing be upon thee. May mercy and truth be with thee." He did not send him away because he doubted him, but because he felt that he had no claim to the great sacrifices which Ittai might have to make in attending his chequered fortunes. "I do not know what may become of me," he seems to say, "but I do not want to drag you down with myself. Should my cause become desperate, I have no wish to involve you in it, and therefore with the best of motives I wish you farewell." I admire this generosity of spirit. Some men have great expectations: they live upon their friends, and yet complain that charity is cold. These people expect more from their friends than they ought to give. A man's best friends on earth ought to be his own strong arms. Loafers are parasitical plants, they have no root of their own, but like the mistletoe they strike root into some other tree, and suck the very soul out of it for their own nourishment. Sad that men should ever degrade themselves to such despicable meanness! While you can help yourselves, do so, and while you have a right to expect help in times of dire necessity, do not be everlastingly expecting everybody else to be waiting upon you. Feel as David did towards Ittai—that you would by no means wish for services to which you have no

claim. Independence of spirit used to be characteristic of Englishmen. I hope it will always continue to be so; and especially among children of God.

On the other hand, look at Ittai, perfectly free to go, but in order to end the controversy once for all, and to make David know that he does not mean to leave him, he takes a solemn oath before Jehovah his God, and he doubles it by swearing by the life of David that he will never leave him; in life, in death, he will be with him. He has cast in his lot with him for better and for worse, and he means to be faithful to the end. Old Master Trapp says, "All faithful friends went on a pilgrimage years ago, and none of them have ever come back." I scarcely credit that, but I am afraid that friends quite so faithful as Ittai are as scarce as two moons in the sky at once, and you might travel over the edge of the world before you found them. I think, however, that one reason why faithful Ittais have become so scarce may be because large-hearted Davids are so rare. When you tell a man that you expect a good deal of him, he does not see it. Why should you look for so much? He is not your debtor. You have closed at once the valves of his generosity. But when you tell him honestly that you do not expect more than is right, and that you do not wish to be a tax upon him, when he sees that you consult his welfare more than your own, that is the very reason why he feels attached to you, and counts it a pleasure to serve such a generous-hearted man. You will generally find that when two people fall out there are faults on both sides: if generous spirits be few, it may be because faithful friends are rare, and if faithful friends are scarce it may be because generous spirits are scarce too. Be it ours as Christians to live to serve rather than to be served, remembering that we are the followers of a Master who said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We are not to expect others to serve us, but our life is to be spent in endeavouring to serve them.

I am going to use Ittai's language for a further purpose. If Ittai, charmed with David's person and character, though a foreigner and a stranger, felt that he could enlist beneath his banner for life—yea, and declared that he would do so there and then—how much more may you and I, if we know what Christ has done for us, and who he is and what he deserves at our hands, at this good hour plight our troth to him and vow, "As the Lord liveth, surely in whatsoever place my Lord and Saviour shall be, whether in death or life, even there also shall his servant be."

And so I shall begin by noticing first *in what form this declaration was made*, that we may learn from it how to make the same declaration.

I. IN WHAT FORM AND MANNER WAS THIS DECLARATION MADE?

It was made, first, at a time *when David's fortunes were at their lowest ebb*, and consequently it was made unselfishly, without the slightest idea of gain from it. David was now forsaken of everybody. His faithful body-guard was all that he had on earth to depend upon, and then it was that Ittai cast in his lot with David. Now, beloved, it is very easy to follow religion when she goes abroad in her silver slippers, but the true man follows her when she is in rags, and goes through the mire and the slough. To take up with Christ when everybody cries up his

name is what a hypocrite would do, but to take up with Christ when they are shouting, "Away with him! away with him!" is another matter. There are times in which the simple faith of Christ is at a great discount. At one time imposing ceremonies are all the rage, and everybody loves decorated worship, and the pure simplicity of the gospel is overloaded and encumbered with meretricious ornaments; it is such a season that we must stand out for God's more simple plan, and reject the symbolism which verges on idolatry and hides the simplicity of the gospel.

At another time the gospel is assailed by learned criticisms and by insinuations against the authenticity and inspiration of the books of Scripture, while fundamental doctrines are undermined one by one, and he who keeps to the old faith is said to be behind the age, and so on. But happy is that man who takes up with Christ, and with the gospel, and with the truth when it is in its worst estate, crying, "If this be foolery, I am a fool, for where Christ is there will I be; I love him better at his worst than others at their best, and even if he be dead and buried in a sepulchre I will go with Mary and with Magdalene and sit over against the sepulchre and watch until he rise again, for rise again he will; but whether he live or die, where he is there shall his servant be." Ho, then, brave spirits, will ye enlist for Christ when his banner is tattered? Will you enlist under him when his armour is stained with blood? Will you rally to him even when they report him slain? Happy shall ye be! Your loyalty shall be proven to your own eternal glory. Ye are soldiers such as he loves to honour.

Ittai gave himself up wholly to David *when he was but newly come to him.* David says, "Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us?" But Ittai does not care whether he came yesterday or twenty years ago, but he declares, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." It is best to begin the Christian life with thorough consecration. Have any of you professed to be Christians, and have you never given yourselves entirely to Christ? It is time that you began again. This should be one of the earliest forms of our worship of our Master—this total resignation of ourselves to him. According to his word, the first announcement of our faith should be by baptism, and the meaning of baptism, or immersion in water, is death, burial, and resurrection. As far as this point is concerned, the avowal is just this: "I am henceforth dead to all but Christ, whose servant I now am. Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The watermark is on me from head to foot. I have been buried with him in baptism unto death to show that henceforth I belong to him." Now, whether you have been baptized or not I leave to yourselves, but in any case this must be true—that henceforth you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. As soon as ever Christ is yours you ought to be Christ's. "I am my Beloved's" should be linked with "My Beloved is mine," in the dawn of the day in which you yield to the Lord.

Again, Ittai surrendered himself to David *in the most voluntary manner.* No one persuaded Ittai to do this; in fact, David seems to have persuaded him the other way. David tested and tried him, but he

voluntarily out of the fulness of his heart said, "Where, my lord, the king, is, there also shall his servant be." Now, dear young people, if you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is yours, give yourselves up to him by a distinct act and deed. Feel that one grand impulse without needing pressure or argument,—"The love of Christ constraineth me"; but do not wait to have your duty urged upon you, for the more free the dedication the more acceptable it will be. I am told that there is no wine so delicious as that which flows from the grape at the first gentle pressure. The longer you squeeze the harsher is the juice. We do not like that service which is pressed out of a man: and certainly the Lord of love will not accept forced labour. No; let your willinghood show itself. Say—

"Take myself, and I will be
Ever, *only*, ALL for thee."

My heart pants after the service of her Lord. With the same spontaneity which Ittai displayed make a solemn consecration of yourselves to David's Lord.

I used a word then which suggests another point, namely, that *Ittai did this very solemnly*. He took an oath which we Christians may not do, and may not wish to do, but still we should make the surrender with quite as much solemnity. In Dr. Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" there is a very solemn form of consecration, which he recommends young men to sign when they give themselves to Christ. I cannot say that I can recommend it, though I practised it, for I fear that there is something of legality about it, and that it may bring the soul into bondage. I have known some write out a deed of dedication to Christ and sign it with their blood. I will neither commend nor censure, but I will say that a complete dedication must be made in some manner, and that it should be done deliberately and with grave thought. You have been bought with a price, and you should, therefore, in a distinct manner own your Lord's property in you, and transfer to him the title-deeds of your body, spirit, and soul.

And this, I think, *Ittai did publicly*. At any rate, he so acted that everybody saw him when David said, "Go over," and he marched in front—the first man to pass the brook. Oh yes, dear friend, you must publicly own yourself a Christian. If you are a Christian you must not try to sneak to heaven round the back alleys, but march up the narrow way like a man and like your Master. He was never ashamed of you, though he might have been: how can you be ashamed of him when there is nothing in him to be ashamed of? Some Christians seem to think that they shall lead an easier life if they never make a profession. Like a rat behind the wainscot they come out after candlelight and get a crumb, and then slip back again. I would not lead such a life. Surely, there is nothing to be ashamed of. A Christian—let us glory in the name! A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—let them write it on our door plates, if they will. Why should we blush at that? "But," says one, "I would rather be a very quiet one." I will now place a torpedo under this cowardly quietness. What saith the Lord Jesus? "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven; but he that shall confess me before men, him

will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Take up your cross and follow him, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." When our Master ascended up on high he told us to preach the gospel to every creature; and how did he put it? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There must be, therefore, the believing and the acknowledgment of believing. "But cannot I be saved as a believer if I do not openly confess Christ?" Dear friend, you have no business to tamper with your Master's command, and then say, "Will he not graciously forgive this omission?" Do not neglect one of the two commands, but obey all his will. If you have the spirit of Ittai you will say, "Wheresoever my lord the king is, there also shall thy servant be."

I leave the matter with the consciences of those who may be like Nicodemus, coming to Jesus by night, or who may be like Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. May they come out and own their Master, believing that then he will own them.

II. Secondly, WHAT DID THIS DECLARATION INVOLVE? As to Ittai, what did it involve?

First, that *he was henceforth to be David's servant.* Of course, as his soldier, he was to fight for him, and to do his bidding. What sayest thou, man? Canst thou lift thy hand to Christ and say, "Henceforth I will live as thy servant, not doing my own will, but thy will. Thy command is henceforth my rule"? Canst thou say that? If not, do not mock him, but stand back. May the Holy Ghost give thee grace thus to begin, thus to persevere, and thus to end.

It involved, next, for Ittai that *he was to do his utmost for David's cause,* not to be his servant in name, but his soldier, ready for scars and wounds and death, if need be, on the king's behalf. That is what Ittai meant as, in rough soldier-tones, he took the solemn oath that it should be so. Now, if thou wouldst be Christ's disciple, determine henceforth by his grace that thou wilt defend his cause; that if there be rough fighting thou wilt be in it; and if there be a forlorn hope needed thou wilt lead it, and go through floods and flames if thy Master's cause shall call thee. Blessed is the man who will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, giving himself wholly up to his Lord to serve him with all his heart.

But Ittai in *his promise declared that he would give a personal attendance upon the person of his master.* That was, indeed, the pith of it. "In what place my lord, the king, shall be, even there also will thy servant be." Brethren, let us make the same resolve in our hearts, that wherever Christ is, there we will be. Where is Christ? In heaven. We will be there by-and-by. Where is he here, spiritually? Answer: in his church. The church is a body of faithful men; and where these are met together, there is Jesus in the midst of them. Very well, then, we will join the church, for wherever our Lord, the King, is, there also shall his servants be. When the list of the redeemed is read we will be found in the register, for our Lord's name is there.

Where else did Jesus go? In the commencement of his ministry he descended into the waters of baptism. Let us follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. At the close of his ministry he brake bread, and said,

"This do ye in remembrance of me." Be often at his table, for if there is a place on the earth where he manifests himself to his children it is where bread is broken in his name. Let me now tell a secret. Some of you may have heard it before, but you have forgotten it. Here it is—my Lord is generally here at prayer-meetings on Monday nights, and, indeed, whenever his people come together for prayer, there he is. So I will read you my text, and see whether you will come up to it—"Surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether it be in a prayer-meeting or at a sermon, even there also will thy servant be." If you love your Lord, you know where his haunts are; take care that you follow hard after him there.

Where is the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, brethren, he is wherever the truth is, and I pray God that he may raise up a race of men and women in England who are determined to be wherever the truth of God is. We have a host of molluscous creatures about who will always be where the congregation is the most respectable: respectability being measured by clothes and cash. Time was in the church of God when they most esteemed the most pious men; has it come to this that gold takes precedence of grace? Our fathers considered whether a ministry was sound, but now the question is—Is the man clever? Words are preferred to truth, and oratory takes the lead of the gospel. Shame on such an age. O you who have not altogether sold your birthrights, I charge you keep out of this wretched declension.

The man who loves Christ thoroughly will say, "Wheresoever the Lord the King is, there also shall his servant be, if it be with half a dozen poor Baptists or Methodists, or among the most despised people in the town." I charge you, beloved, in whatever town or country your lot is cast, be true to your colours, and never forsake your principles. Wherever the truth is, there go, and where there is anything contrary to truth, do not go, for there your Master is not to be found.

What next? Well, our Master is to be found wherever there is anything to be done for the good of our fellow-men. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be found wherever there is work to be done in seeking after his lost sheep. Some people say that they have very little communion with Christ, and when I look at them, I do not wonder. Two persons cannot walk together if they will not walk at the same pace. Now, my Lord walks an earnest pace whenever he goes through the world, for the King's business requires haste; and if his disciples crawl after a snail's fashion they will lose his company. If some of our groaning brethren would go to the Sunday-school, and there begin to look after the little children, they would meet with their Lord who used to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." If others were to get together a little meeting, and teach the ignorant, they would there find him who had compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way. Our Master is where there are fetters to be broken, burdens to be removed, and hearts to be comforted, and if you wish to keep with him you must aid in such service.

Where is our Master? Well, he is always on the side of truth and right. And, O, you Christian people, mind that in everything—politics, business, and everything—you keep to that which is right, not to that which is popular. Do not bow the knee to that which for a

lay may be cried up, but stand fast in that which is consistent
ectitude, with humanity, with the cause and honour of God, and
he freedom and progress of men. It can never be wise to do wrong.
. never be foolish to be right. It can never be according to the
of Christ to tyrannize and to oppress. Keep you ever to what-
· things are pure and lovely and of good report, and you will so
ep with Christ. Temperance, purity, justice—these are favourites
ıim; do your best to advance them for his sake.
›ve all, remember how Jesus loved secret prayer, and if you
e to keep with him you must be much at the throne of grace.
ill not detain you over each of these points, but simply say that
ı declaration meant also this—that *he intended to share David's*
ion. If David was great, Ittai would rejoice. If David was exiled,
would attend his wanderings. Our point must be to resolve in
strength to keep to Christ in all weathers and in all companies,
ıat whether in life or death. Ah that word "death" makes it
because then we reap the blessed result of having lived with
. We shall go upstairs for the last time and bid good-bye to all,
ıen we shall feel that in death he is still with us as in life we
›een with him. Though our good works can never be a ground
fidence when we are dying, yet if the Lord enables us to follow
amb whithersoever he goeth, and so to lead a decided, positive,
ight, upright Christian life, our death pillow will not be stuffed
thorns of regret, but we shall have to bless God that we bore a
l witness as far as we were able to do so. In such a case we
ot when we are dying wish to go back again to rectify the mis-
ınd insincerities of our lives. No, beloved, it will be very, very
to be alone with Jesus in death. He will make all our bed in our
ss; he will make our dying pillow soft, and our soul shall vanish,
away by his dear lips, and we shall be with him for ever and for
Of those that are nearest to him it is said, "These are they that
the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They shall walk with him in
for they are worthy."
nclude with this observation. Will our Lord Jesus Christ accept
hands to-night such a consecrating word? If we are trusting in
r salvation will he permit us to say that we will keep with him
; as we live?
reply, he will not permit us to say it in our own strength. There
young man who said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever
oest," but Christ gave him a cool reception: and there was an
nan who said, "Though all men shall forsake thee yet will not
l in reply his Master prayed for him that his faith should not fail.
'ou must not promise as Peter did, or you will make a greater
. But, beloved, this self-devotion is what Christ expects of us if
his disciples. He will not have us love father or mother more
ım; we must be ready to give up all for his sake. This is not
hat our Master expects from us, but what he deserves from us.

> "Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all."

, also, is what the Lord will help us to do, for he will give us

grace if we will but seek it at his hands: and this it is which he will graciously reward, and has already rewarded, in that choice word of his in the twelfth of John, where he says of his disciples in the twenty-sixth verse, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Oh, to be honoured of God in eternity when he shall say, "Stand back, angels; make way, seraphim and cherubim; here comes a man that suffered for the sake of my dear Son. Here comes one that was not ashamed of my Only-begotten when his face was smeared with the spittle. Here comes one that stood in the pillory with Jesus, and was called ill names for his sake. Stand back, ye angels, these have greater honour than you." Surely the angels of heaven as they traverse the streets of gold and meet the martyrs will ask them about their sufferings, and say, "You are more favoured than we, for you have had the privilege of suffering and dying for the Lord." O brothers and sisters, snatch at the privilege of living for Jesus; consecrate yourselves this day unto him; live from this hour forward, not to enrich yourselves, nor to gain honour and esteem, but for Jesus, for Jesus alone. Oh, if I could set him before you here; if I could cause him to stand on this platform just as he came from Gethsemane with his bloody sweat about him, or as he came down from the cross with wounds so bright with glory and so fresh with bleeding out our redemption, I think I should hear you say, each one of you, "Lord Jesus, we are thine, and in what place thou shalt be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servants be." So may the Lord help us by his most gracious Spirit who hath wrought all our works in us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Samuel xv. 13—23; Matthew x. 24—33.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—670, 658, 666.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—The Lord has been graciously pleased to release his prisoner. I am weak, but the pain is gone, and in this land of bright sun and warm air I expect soon to recover strength. If my hopes are fulfilled, I shall have escaped this time with a lighter measure of chastening than for several previous years, and for this I feel doubly grateful. To all those by whose prayers I have been comforted and blessed I return hearty thanks.

Special services are commencing at the Tabernacle, and I entreat friends at home to throw their whole souls into them. I also beg my readers to pray that my beloved work at home may not suffer through my absence, but that it may please God through these special services to revive and increase the spiritual life of the church committed to my care. Then will all the agencies be quickened also, and great blessing will come to the people of God.

Unto the Lord our God belong the issues from death, and he restoreth our soul. To him be glory for ever.

With love to all the saints, yours,

Mentone, Dec. 26, 1879. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHEER UP, MY COMRADES!

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Josiah set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord."—2 Chronicles xxxv. 2.

JOSIAH, as you remember, in the early part of his reign set his face against the idolatries that prevailed, to root them out of the land. He then bent his thoughts upon repairing and beautifying the temple. After that it was his heart's aim to restore the sacred services, to observe the solemn feasts, and to revive the worship of God after the due order, according to the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. Our text tells us something of the method with which he went to work; and it may well serve us as a model.

The first thing is to get every man into his proper place; the next thing is for every man to have a good spirit in his present place, so as to occupy it worthily. I will suppose, dear friends, that in the providence of God you are in your place, and that by the direction of God's Spirit you have also sought and found the precise form of usefulness in which you ought to exercise yourself. To-night it shall not be my business to arrange you; but assuming that it is well for you to keep where you are, my object shall be to encourage you to do your work for your Lord without being cast down. I am hardly going to preach so much as to talk to different persons who are discouraged in the work of the Lord, that we may rouse them up, rally them round us, and encourage them to keep rank.

I. And, first, I would speak a little to THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY CAN DO NOTHING. They will tell me that in such a sermon not a sentence can concern them: if I am to encourage men to the service of the house of the Lord, it will be in vain for them, as they can do nothing at all. Well, dear friends, you must not take that for granted; you must make quite sure that you cannot do anything before I may venture to speak to you as if it were a matter of fact; for sometimes there is a want of way because there is a want of will. Though I do not go so far as to allege that this is your case, we know too well that "cannot" often does mean "will not," and not to have triumphed may mean that you have not tried. You have been so discouraged that you have excused

yourself for inaction, and your inaction has grown into indolence. If a man, under the notion that he could not lift his right hand, constantly kept it still, I should not wonder if, after weeks and months, it would become a matter of fact that he had not the power to use it. It might actually stiffen for no reason but because he had not moved it. Do you not think that, before your muscles get rigid, it would be well to exercise them by attempting some kind of service? Especially you younger folk, if you do not work for the Lord almost as soon as you are converted it will be very difficult afterwards to make you take to it. Aptitude, I have often noticed, comes with employment, and through negligence and sloth people become enervated and helpless. You say that you cannot move your arm, and so you do not move it; take heed, for by-and-by your pretence will become the parent of real powerlessness.

But I will take what you have said as being true. You are ill; the vigour you felt in the bright days of health fails you now; you have to suffer pain, weariness, and exhaustion; you are often detained at home; and home seems now to you a gloomy hospital all the day long, rather than a genial hostelry when evening shadows fall. Little indeed, therefore, can you do; so little that you are apt to reckon it as nothing at all. The thought is a burden to you. You wish you could serve the Lord. How constantly you have dreamed of the pleasure since you have been denied the privilege! How willing your feet would be to run; how ready your hands would be to labour; how glad would your tongue be to testify! You envy those who are able, and you would fain emulate and excel them; not indeed that you harbour ill-will against them, but you devoutly wish that you could do some personal service in the cause of your Master.

Now, I want to encourage you first by reminding you that the law of the Son of David is the same as the law of David himself; and you know the law of David about those that went to the battle. There were some that were lame, and some that were otherwise incapable of action, and he left them with the baggage. "There," he said, "you are very weary and ill: stop in the camp: take care of the tents, and the ammunition, while we go and fight." Now, it happened once on a time that the men that went to fight claimed all the spoil. They said, "These people have done nothing: they have been lying in the trenches: they shall not carry off a share of the booty." But King David there and then made a law that they should share and share equally—those that were in the trenches and those that engaged in the fray. "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel." Nor is the law of the Son of David less gracious. If by sickness you are detained at home, —if for any other reason, such as age or infirmity, you are not able to enter into actual service, yet if you are a true soldier and would fight if you could, and your heart is in it, you shall share even with the best and bravest of those who, clad in the panoply of God, encounter and grapple with the adversary.

And, brethren, you have no reason to envy, though you may admire to your heart's content, all who are diligent and successful in the service of Christ. Let me remind you of a law of the kingdom of heaven with

which you are all familiar—"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." In truth, it is a splendid appointment to be a servant of the Lord. David thought so, for you often read at the commencement of his psalms—"A prayer of David, the servant of God," though you never read, "A prayer of David, the king of Israel," for he thought more of being enrolled a servant of God than of being entitled a king of Israel. Health and strength, ability and opportunity to fulfil a mission for the Master are much to be desired, but these are not always to be taken as reliable evidence of personal salvation. A man may preach admirably, and he may work marvels in the church, and yet himself not be a partaker of saving grace. Hence, when the disciples came back from preaching, and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name," the Lord said, "Nevertheless, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Judas was amongst them; Judas cast out devils; Judas preached the gospel; and yet Judas was a son of perdition, and is lost for ever. Because you cannot do much you must not infer that therefore you are not saved; for if you were to be among the chief of Christian workers it would not prove that you were certainly a child of God. Do not fret, then, because you are shut out from the cheerful activities in which others share; for, as long as your name is written in heaven, and your heart truly follows after the Lord, you shall have an abundant recompense at the last great day, even though here you are doomed to be a sufferer rather than a worker.

But to me it seems more than possible that some of you, dear friends, whose minds are tinged with melancholy, have painted your own lot in deeper shades than the justice of the case deserves. Is your life indeed a dull routine, which, for lack of busy change and lively enterprise, leaves no record behind? Not so, methinks. "The rich relics of a well-spent hour" do sometimes pour around your path a stream of light that cheers *our* eyes, though it may escape your notice. Are you patient under your sufferings? Do you try to keep the flesh in subjection, to govern your spirit, to refrain from murmuring, and to foster cheerfulness? That, my friend, is doing a great deal. I am sure that the holy serenity of a suffering child of God is one of the best sermons that can ever be preached in a family. A sick saint has often been more serviceable in a house than the most eloquent divine could have been. They see how sweetly you submit to the divine will, how patiently you can bear painful operations, how the Lord gives you songs in the night. Why, you are greatly useful. I have sometimes been called to visit bedridden persons who have been unable to rise for many, many years, and it has been within my knowledge that their influence has extended over whole parishes. They have been known as poor pious women or as experienced Christian men, and many have gone to visit them. Christian ministers have said that they derived more benefit from sitting half-an-hour talking to poor old Betsy than they did from all the books in their library, and yet Betsy said that she was doing nothing. Look at your case in that light, and you will see that you can praise God upon your bed, and make your chamber to be as vocal for God as this pulpit ever can be.

Besides, dear friends, do you not think we frequently limit our estimate of serving God to the public exercises of the sanctuary, and forget the

strong claims that our Lord has upon our private fidelity and obedience? You say, "I cannot serve God," when you cannot teach in the school or preach in the pulpit, when you are unable to sit on a committee or speak on a platform: as if these were the only forms of service to be taken into account. Do you not think that a mother nursing her baby is serving God? Do you not think that men and women going about their daily toil with patient industry discharging the duties of domestic life are serving God? If you think rightly you will understand that they are. The servant sweeping the room, the mistress preparing the meal, the workman driving a nail, the merchant casting up his ledger, ought to do all in the service of God. Though, of course, it is very desirable that we should each and all have some definitely religious work before us, yet it is much better that we should hallow our common handicraft, and make our ordinary work chime with the melodies of a soul attuned for heaven. Let true religion be our life, and then our life will be true religion. That is how it ought to be. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." So, then, let the stream of your common life as it flows on, obscure, unobserved, be holy and courageous; you will find that while "they also serve who only stand and wait," you shall not be neglected or overlooked who simply sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his words when you can do no more. This is service done for him which he can appreciate; complain who may.

Know, too, my dear sister, that by thy sorrows the Lord has drawn out thy sympathies. Thou, my dear brother, know that by the discipline which has chastened thee, thou hast learned to be a comforter. Say you, then, that you cannot do anything? I know a few secrets about you that you forget. You do not reckon yourself up as we reckon you. Did you not try to cheer a poor neighbour the other day by telling of the Lord's goodness to you when you were very sick yourself? How started from your eye that tear most sacred shed for a fellow-creature's pain? Is it not your habit, poor sufferer as you are, to let drop just a few words for your Master to others in a like condition whenever you can? You tell me that you cannot do anything. Why, dear hearts, the refreshing of God's saints is one of the highest works in which anyone can be occupied. God will send *prophets* to his servants at times when they need to be rebuked; if he wants to comfort them he generally sends an *angel* to them, for that is angel's work. Jesus Christ himself, we read, had angels sent to minister to him. When? Was it not in the garden of Gethsemane, when he was bowed down with sorrow? Comforting is not ordinary work: it is a kind of angelic work. "There appeared unto him an angel strengthening him." A prophet was sent to warn the Israelites of their sin; but when a Gideon was to be encouraged to go and fight for his country, it was the angel of the Lord that came to him. So I gather that comforting work is angel's work. You, dear kind Christian men and women, who think that you are not able to do anything but to condole or to console with cheery words some souls cast down and sore dismayed, you are fulfilling a most blessed office, and doing work which many ministers find it difficult to perform. I have known some who have never known suffering or ill-health, and when they try to comfort God's weary people they

are dreadfully awkward over it. They are like elephants picking up pins: they can do it, but it is with a wonderful effort. God's tried people comfort each other *con amore;* they take to the work as a fish to water. They understand the art of speaking a word in season to him that is weary, and when this is the case they may not complain that they are doing nothing.

And yet, beloved, you who thought that you did nothing, and now perceive that you are really useful, will, I hope, perceive that there is still a wider region into which you may advance. Breathe to-night the prayer of Jabez, who was more honourable than his brethren, because he was the child of his mother's sorrow; and this was the prayer—"Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast!" Ask God to open up to you a larger region of usefulness, and he will do it.

II. Now let me address a few words to another class of workers WHO THINK THAT THEY ARE LAID ASIDE.

"Dear sir," says one, "I wish you would encourage me. I used to be useful once; at least, I was recognized as one of a band of men who worked together right heartily, but since I have changed my residence I am unknown in the neighbourhood where I am living, and I seem to have dropped out of the ranks. I have done little or nothing lately, and I feel uneasy about it. I wish that I could get to work." My dear brother, I hope you will; but do not waste five minutes in thinking it over. These times need so much Christian effort that when a man asks me, "How shall I do work for Christ?" I am accustomed to say, "Go and do it." "But what is the way to do it?" Start at once. Get at it, my brother. Do not be out of harness a minute. But suppose that you are obliged to desist awhile, do not let your interest in the cause of our Lord and Master decline. Some of the best of God's workers have been laid aside for long periods. Moses was forty years in the desert, doing nothing. A greater than he, our blessed Saviour himself, was thirty years,—I will not say doing nothing, but certainly doing no public work. When you are in a retired and inactive position, be preparing for the time when God brings you out again. If you are put away on the shelf, do not rust there, but pray the Master to brighten you up so that when he comes to use you again you may be fully fitted for the work which he has in hand for you.

While you must be laid aside, I want you to do this,—pray for others that are at work. Help them; encourage them. Do not get into that peevish, miserable frame of mind which grudges and undervalues other men's works. Be not like the dog in the manger. Some people, when they cannot do anything themselves, do not like anybody else to be diligent and laborious. Say, "If I cannot help, I will never hinder, but I will cheer my brethren."

Spend your time in prayer that you may be fit for the Master's use, and, meanwhile, be prompt in helping others. You remember that, at the siege of Gibraltar, when the fleet surrounded it and determined to storm the old rock, the governor fired red-hot shot down upon the men of war. The enemy did not at all admire the governor's warm reception. Think how it was done. Here were gunners on the ramparts firing away, and every man in the garrison would have liked to do the same. What did those do who could not serve a gun? Why, *they heated the shot;*

and that is what you must do. I am master gunner here generally: heat my shot for me, if you will. Keep the furnace going, so that when we do fire off a sermon it may be red-hot, through your earnest prayers. When you see your friends sitting in the Sunday-school, or standing out in the street working for God, if you cannot join them yet say, "Never mind: I will heat the shot for them. My prayers shall not be wanting, if I can contribute nothing else." That is counsel for you who are for awhile laid on the shelf.

III. Others there are who are much discouraged because THEY HAVE BUT SMALL TALENT. "Oh," they say, "I wish I could serve Jesus Christ like Paul, or like Whitefield—that I could range the country through proclaiming his dear name and winning thousands of converts. But I am slow of speech and dull of thought, and what I attempt produces little or no effect." Well, brother, mind that you do what you can. Do you not recollect the parable of the men who had talents entrusted to them? I do not want to lay undue stress upon the fact that it was the man who had one talent who buried it. Yet why is he represented as doing so? I think it was not because the men of two and five talents do not sometimes bury theirs, but because the temptation lies most with the one talent people. They say, "What can I do? What is the use of me? I may be excused." That is the temptation. Brother, do not be entangled in that snare. If your Lord has only given you one talent he does not expect you to make the same interest upon it as the man does with five; but still he does expect his interest, and therefore do not wrap your talent in a napkin. It is but with strength imparted that any of us can serve him. We have nothing to consecrate to him but the gift we have first received from him. You are weak. You feel it; but what says your God to you? "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." He can make you useful though you have no extraordinary endowments. Grape-shot may do great execution, though it cannot compare with grenade or bomb-shell. A sinner may be brought to Christ by the simple earnestness of a peasant or an artisan, without calling in the aid of a professor's learning or a preacher's eloquence. God can bless you far above what you think to be your capacity, for it is not a question of your ability but of his aid. You have no self-reliance, you tell me. Then take refuge in God, I entreat you, for you evidently want more of the divine succour. Go and get it; it is to be had. He girds the weak with strength. "The young men shall faint and be weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Why, I think *you* are more likely to do good than if you had five talents, for now you will pray more and you will depend more upon God than you would have done if you had possessed strength of your own.

One other word. As you are not enriched with many talents, mind you economize those you have. Do you know how merchants and tradesmen who have only a small capital in business manage to compete with those who have larger means? They try to turn their money over every day. The costermonger cannot afford to deal out his goods to gentlemen who will pay him in three months. Not he. He must get his ready money at the door, and then go and buy another stock to-morrow morning, and turn it over, or else he could not pick up his living with

so small a capital. If you have only ninepence, make it "nimble," and you will get as much profit out of a nimble ninepence as another out of a lazy crown. Activity often makes up for lack of ability. If you cannot get force by the weight of the ball, get it by the velocity with which it travels. A little man with one talent all ablaze may become a perfect nuisance to the devil, and a champion for Christ. As for that great divine with his five talents, who marches on so sleepily, Satan can always overmarch him and win the day. If you can but turn over your one talent again and again, in the name of God, you may achieve great wonders. So I would encourage you in the work of the Lord.

IV. With workers WHO ARE UNDER GREAT DIFFICULTIES I would now have a word. I have known the day when perplexities pleased me, dilemmas afforded me delight, and instead of declining a difficult task I rather liked it. Even now I enjoy puzzling over a problem, and attempting what others decline. Nothing good in this world can be effected without difficulty. The biggest diamonds lie under heavy stones which sluggards cannot turn over. That which is easy to do is hardly worth doing. In the face of difficulty the man of ardent, persevering spirit braces up his nerves, sharpens his wits, and brings all his powers into play to achieve an object that will reward his efforts. Have you great difficulties, dear friend? You are not the first worker for God who has had difficulties to encounter. Let us go back to Moses again. He was to bring Israel out of Egypt; but his path did not appear very plain. He must go before Pharaoh and issue God's command. Pharaoh looked him through when he said, "Let my people go." The haughty monarch was greatly surprised to hear anybody, especially a Hebrew, talk like that; and so he bade him begone. But Moses returns with, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go"; and his courage was not even then crowned with immediate success. There must be plague upon plague, plague upon plague, till at last proud Pharaoh's heart was broken, the Israelites were saved from the hand of him that hated them; and Egypt was glad when they departed. This, however, was but the beginning of the mission of Moses. His was a life of difficulty—the meekest man, but the most provoked; and until he got to the top of Pisgah, and his gracious Master kissed away his soul, the prophet of Horeb had never done with difficulties. Any good thing, I say, especially any good thing done for God, must be surrounded with difficulties, and resisted by adversaries. Look at Nehemiah, and Ezra, and Zerubbabel, and those that built Jerusalem the second time. These good men wrought zealously, but Sanballat and Tobiah were jeering and jesting, and trying to throw down the wall. If you build a city without difficulty, it is not Jerusalem. Be sure of that. As soon as ever you begin working for God you will find a great power working against you. If you encounter opposition, take it as a good sign. When our young men go to a provincial town to preach, and I want to know how they are getting on, after listening to their story, I ask, "Has somebody slandered you yet? Do the newspapers denounce you as a fool?" If they say "No," I conclude that they are not getting on much. If Christ's cause is prospering the world will reproach the soul-winner; if you do damage to the devil's kingdom he will roar at you. Should your course be smooth it is because he says, "There is nothing to disturb me

in that man's monotonous talk. I need not let fly the fiery dart of calumny at him: he is a chip in the porridge, I will let him alone." Such a man generally goes through life very comfortably. People say, "He is a quiet, inoffensive sort of man." We do not want such soldiers in the service of Christ. "What a disagreeable person!" said a king once of an officer whose sword rattled on the floor. "That sword of his is most offensive." "Sire," said the officer, "that is exactly what your majesty's enemies think." When ungodly persons say that we are troublesome, we are not broken-hearted at being out of their good looks. If the king's enemies think us troublesome, we reckon it to be high praise. When you, my dear brother, meet with opposition, encounter it with prayer. Exercise more faith. Antagonists ought never to hinder your going forward in the cause of Christ. Diamond must cut diamond. There is nothing so hard in this world but you can cut it with something harder. If you ask God to steel your soul up to the conquering point, and to make your resolution like an adamant stone, you can cut your way through an alp of diamond in the service of your Lord and Master.

Let me inspirit you in the face of assailants. The forces ranged against you might be stumbling-blocks to fools, but they shall only prove a stimulus to men. One day your honour shall be the greater and your reward shall be the higher because of these adverse elements. Therefore, be brave and fear not, but advance in the strength of God.

V. Fain would I now speak a passing word of comfort to another class of workers—THOSE THAT ARE NOT APPRECIATED. I am not going to say much, because I have not much sympathy with them. Yet I know that the smallest slight chafes those who are over sensitive. They murmur, "I do my best, and nobody thanks me." You think yourself a martyr, and complain that you are misrepresented. Be it so, dear friend; that was your Master's lot, and it is the lot of all his servants. This is a cross we must all carry, or we shall never wear the crown. Do you fancy that this is a new experience? Look at Joseph. His brethren could not bear him, and yet it was he that saved the family and fed them in time of famine. Look at David. His brothers asked why he had left the charge of the sheep to come down to the battle, suspecting that the pride of his heart had brought him among the soldiers and the standards. Yet nobody could bring back Goliath's head but that young David. Take a lesson from the ruddy hero: take no notice of what your brethren say about you. Go and bring back the giant's head. A good adventure is the best answer to evil accusations. If you are serving the Master let their scandal stir you up to more self-consecration. If they cry out against you as too forward, serve the Lord with more vigour, and you will antidote the venom of their tongues. Did you enter into Christ's work in order to be honoured among men? Then retire from it, for you came with a bad motive. But if you enlisted purely to bring honour to Him, and to win his smile, what more do you want? What more do you want? Be not therefore disheartened because you are not applauded. Be certain of this, that to be kept in the rear rank is often necessary to future eminence. If you take a man and put him in front, and pat him on the back and say, "What a great man he is!" he will make a false step before long,

and there will be an end of your hero; but when a man is brought forward by God, he is often one whom everybody criticizes, finds fault with, and declaims as an impostor, but the banter he is exposed to serves as ballast for his mind. When he comes off with success he will not be spoiled with conceit, for the grace of God will make him bow with gratitude. The sword that is meant for a princely hand, to split through skull and backbone in the day of battle, must be annealed in the furnace again and again: it cannot be fit for such desperate work until it has passed through the fire full many a time. Do not ask to be appreciated. Never be so mean as that. Appreciate yourself in the serenity of conscience, and leave your honour with your God.

VI. I must speak now, in the last place, a little more at length to THOSE WHO ARE DISCOURAGED BECAUSE THEY HAVE HAD SO LITTLE SUCCESS.

It was my great delight a few evenings ago to meet a splendid band of men and women who are the Sunday-school teachers of this church. You will think it strange that I did not till then thoroughly estimate the extent of their work, as I had never added up the total of the various schools; but when I did so, and found that they mounted up to six thousand children, I felt full of joy. I shall run over with delight if they increase to twelve thousand in another twelve months. For so large a district this would not be too many, but still our present number is most encouraging. Now, I know that some of our teachers are working away in back streets, in rooms not connected with any place but this, and we hardly knew of them, because they were pursuing their simple, unobtrusive labours so quietly. Are there any of you who fear that you have toiled in vain and spent your strength for nought? I would entreat you, dear friends, not to be satisfied with casting in the seed unless you reap some good results; yet do not be so faint-hearted as to give up because of a little disappointment. Though you cannot be satisfied without fruit, yet do not cease to sow because one season proves a failure. I would not have our friends the farmers abandon agriculture because this year they have a bad crop: if they were to measure their future prospects by the present failure, it would be a great pity. If you have preached or taught, or done work for Christ with little success until now, do not infer that you will always be unsuccessful. Regret the lack of prosperity, but do not relinquish the labour of seeking it. You may reasonably be sorrowful, but you have no right to despair. Non-success is a trial of faith which has been endured by many a trusty servant who has been triumphant in the issue. Did not the disciples toil all night, and catch nothing? Did we not read just now of some who cast the net, and yet took no fish? Did not our Lord say that some seed would fall on stony ground, and some among the thorns, and that from these there would be no harvest? What good did Jeremiah do? I have no doubt he laboured, and God blessed him, but the result of his preaching was that he said, "The bellows are burned in the fire." He had blown up the fire till he had burnt the bellows, but no man's heart was melted. "Woe is me!" said he. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" I do not know what was the result of Noah's ministry, but I do know that he was a preacher of righteousness for a hundred and twenty years, and yet he never brought a soul into the ark

except his own family. Poor preaching we may count it judging by the influence it exerted: and yet we know that it was grand preaching, such as God commended. Do not, then, grudge the time, or the strength, you lay out in the service of our great Lord because you do not see your efforts thrive, for better men than you have wept over failure.

Remember, too, that if you really do serve the Lord thoroughly and heartily, he will accept you and acknowledge your service, even though no good should come of it. It is your business to cast the bread on the waters: if you do not find it after many days, that is not your business. It is your business to scatter the seed; but no farmer says to his servant, "John, you have not served me well, for there is no harvest." The man would say, "Could I make a harvest, sir? I have ploughed, and I have sowed. What more could I do?" Even so our good Lord is not austere, nor does he demand of us more than we can do. If you have ploughed and if you have sowed, although there should be no harvest, you are clear and accepted. Did it never strike you that you may be now employed in breaking up ground and preparing the soil from which other labourers who come after you will reap very plentifully. Perhaps your Master knows what a capital ploughman you are. He has a large farm, and he never means to let you become a reaper because you do the ploughing so well. Your Master does not intend you to take part in the harvest because you are such a good hand at sowing; and as he has crops that need sowing all the year round he keeps you at that work. He knows you better than you know yourself. Perchance if he were once to let you get on the top of a loaded wagon of your own sheaves, you would turn dizzy and make a fall of it; so he says, "You keep to your ploughing and your sowing, and somebody else shall do the reaping." Peradventure when your course is run you will see from heaven, where it will be safe for you to see it, that you did not labour in vain nor spend your strength for nought. "One soweth and another reapeth." This is the divine economy. I think that every man that loves his Master will say, "So long as there does but come a harvest, I will not stipulate about who reaps it. Give me faith enough to be assured that the reaping will come, and I will be content." Look at William Carey going to India, his prayer being "India for Christ." What did Carey live to see? Well, he saw good-speed enough to rejoice his heart: but certainly he did not see the fulfilment of all his prayer. Successive missionaries have since gone and spent their life on that vast field of enterprise. With what result? A result amply sufficient to justify all their toil, but, as compared with the millions that sit in heathendom, utterly inadequate to the craving of the church, much less to the crown of Christ. It does not much matter how any one man fares. The mighty empire will revert to the world's Redeemer, and I can almost trace in the records of the future the writing of "These be the names of the mighty men whom David had," as the valiant deeds of his heroes are chronicled by our Lord. When old St. Paul's cathedral had to be taken down in order to make room for the present noble edifice, some of the walls were immensely strong and stood like rocks. Sir Christopher Wren determined to throw them down by the old Roman battering-ram. The battering-ram began to work, and the men worked at it for hours and hours, day after day, without apparent effect. Blow after blow came on the wall: tremendous thuds that made

the bystanders tremble. The wall continued to stand till they thought it was a useless operation. But the architect knew. He continued working his battering-ram till every particle of the wall felt the motion, and at last over it went in one tremendous ruin. Did anybody commend those workmen who caused the final crash, or ascribe all the success to them? Not a bit of it. It was the whole of them together. Those who had gone away to their meals, those who had begun days before, had as much honour in the matter as those who struck the last blow. And it is so in the work of Christ. We must keep on battering, battering, battering, and at last—though it may not be for another thousand years—the Lord will triumph. Though Christ cometh quickly he may not come for another ten thousand years, but in any case idolatry must die, and truth must reign. The accumulated prayers and energies of ages shall do the deed, and God shall be glorified. Only let us persevere in holy effort, and the end is sure. When a certain American general was fighting they said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am not doing much, but I keep pegging away." That is what we must do. We cannot do much at any one time, but we must keep on. We must keep on pegging away at the enemy, and something will come of it by-and-by.

Possibly, dear friends, some of you who think you have had slender success may have had a great deal more than you know of. Others there may be whose want of success should suggest to them to try somewhere else, or else to try some other method. If we cannot do good in one way we must do it in another. Bring the matter before God in prayer. Cry mightily to him, for he will help you yet to do it, and his shall be the glory. When he has laid you low, when he has taught you how inefficient you are, when he has driven you in despair to rely implicitly upon himself, then it may be that he will give you more trophies and triumphs than you ever dreamed of. Anyhow, whether I prosper in life or not is not my question. To bring souls to Christ is my main endeavour, but it is not the ultimate proof of my ministry. My business is to live for God, to lay aside self, and give myself up wholly to him, and if I do that I shall be accepted whatever else may happen. I wish we had the spirit of that brave old man who was condemned to the stake. They were going to burn him. He knew that the sentence was to be carried out the next morning, but with a soul full of courage, and with a merry heart, he sat the last thing at night talking with his friends —faggots and fire to face in the morning, recollect—and he said to one of them, "I am an old tree in my Master's orchard. When I was young I bore a little fruit by his grace. It was unripe and sour, but he bore with it: and I have grown mellow in my older days, and brought forth some fruit for him by his grace. Now the tree has grown so old that my Master is going to cut it down and burn the old log. Well, it will warm the hearts of some of his family while I am burning"; and he even smiled for joy to think that he might be put to so good a purpose. I want you to have that spirit, and to say, "I will live for Christ while I am young: I will live for him till I die, and if I die a painful death, I will pray to die for him, and warm the hearts of my brethren. You know that the persecutions of those martyr days begat such heroism and gallantry among disciples as prudent people in

peaceful times can scarcely credit. It is said of the old Baptist church over in the City that the members went to Smithfield early one morning to see their pastor burnt, and when some one asked the young people what they went there for, they said that they went *to learn the way.* That is splendid! They went to learn the way. Oh, go to the Master's cross to learn the way to live and die! See how he spent himself for you, and then sally forth and spend yourselves for him. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall ye be glorious in the sight of the Lord." Though you may think that you do not succeed, your whole-hearted consecration shall be your honour in the day of the Lord. By your hallowed life, and your humble service, you shall bring glory to his name. O Lord, set us in our charges, and encourage us in the service of thy house! "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; establish thou the work of our hands: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." May the blessing of our covenant God rest upon you, my brethren, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xxi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—245, 674, 694.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—On this first day of a New Year I salute you with hearty good wishes, and pray that every blessing may attend your future steps. I beg also on my own behalf your prayers that through another year my ministry may be more edifying to the saints, more persuasive with sinners, and more acceptable to the Lord. I thank the great Healer that this day smiles upon me, and sees me free from pain, reviving in strength, and restored in spirit. I shall hope soon to be at work again. Oh for an anointing with fresh oil.

Yours to serve in hearty earnest,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Menton, Jan. 1, 1880.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE KEY-NOTE OF A CHOICE SONNET.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord."—Luke i. 46.

MARY had received a wonderful intimation from heaven of which she herself scarcely understood the full length and breadth. Her faith had apprehended a great promise, which as yet her mind hardly comprehended. Her prayer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word," showed her joyful submission and childlike confidence, and this made her blessed with the blessedness of patient hope. Under divine guidance she made a speedy journey into the hill country to see her cousin Elisabeth, and from her she received a confirmation of the wonderful tidings which the angel had brought to her. Elizabeth herself had been favoured from above, for the Lord had looked upon her, and taken away from her the reproach of barrenness. Amongst other choice words, Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." When Mary had thus been comforted by her friend, and her spirit had been elevated, and her confidence confirmed, she began to sing unto the Lord most sweetly, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Now, if it is a good time with any of you—if in communion with some older believer your confidence has been strengthened, make sure that the Lord has a return for it. When your own heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord. Exalt him when he exalts you. You will perhaps tell me that the Virgin had very especial reason for magnifying the Lord, and I answer, Assuredly she had. "Blessed is she among women," and we are not backward to own the eminent honour which was put upon her. Blessed indeed she was, and highly favoured. But yet, is there any true believer who has not also received special favour of the Lord? Sitting down quietly in our chamber, can we not each one say that the Lord has favoured him or her with some special token of divine love? I think there is something about each believer's case which renders it special. We are none of us exactly like our brethren, for the manifestations of divine grace are very various; and there are some bright lines about your case, brother, which will be seen nowhere else, and some peculiar manifestations about

your happiness, my sister, of which no one else can tell. I might not be straining words if I were to say to many a sister in Christ here, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." And I might say the same to many a brother here: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among men. The Lord hath done great things for thee, and let thy spirit be glad." True, there is one point in which we cannot be compared to Mary literally. She was to be the mother of the human nature of our Lord; but there is a parallel case in each one of us in which a higher mystery—a more spiritual mystery—gives us a like privilege, for, behold, the Holy Ghost dwells in each believer. He lives within us as within a temple, and reigns within us as in a palace. If we be partakers of the Holy Ghost, what more can we desire by way of favour from God, and what greater honour can be bestowed upon us? It was by her that the Word became incarnate, but so also is it by us, for we can make God's Word stand out visibly in our lives. It is ours to turn into actual, palpable existence among the sons of men the glorious Spirit of grace and truth which we find in the Word of God. Truly did our Lord speak when he said to his disciples, "These are my mother, and sister, and brother." We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother, and we in some sense take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to him. May he be formed in us the hope of glory, and may it be ours to tend his infant cause in the world, and watch over it as a nurse does over a child, and spend our life and strength in endeavouring to bring that infant cause to maturity, even though a sword should pass through our own heart while we cherish the babe.

But now, having introduced to you her *magnificat*, we will dwell upon these words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and I do earnestly hope that many of us can adopt the language without being guilty of falsehood: we can as truly say as Mary did, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." If there are any of you present to-night who cannot say it, get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and cry to the Lord to help you to do so; for as long as a man cannot magnify God he is not fit for heaven, where the praises of God are the eternal occupation of all the blessed spirits. If you cannot magnify God, it probably is because you are magnifying yourself. May the Lord cut self down and make nothing of you, and then you will make everything of him. When you sink in your own estimation, then will God rise in your esteem. May God the Holy Ghost make it so.

I. Touching these words, I notice that, first, our text suggests to us AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLE: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord, and have been born into his family.

Observe, it is an occupation which *may be followed by all sorts of people*. This humble woman speaks of her low estate, and yet she could magnify the Lord. All believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. There are some things that you cannot do, but this one thing every gracious heart can do, and should delight to do, namely, to magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation which *can be followed in all places*. You need

not go up to the meeting-house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home: you need not step out of your own quiet little room, for you may sit still, and all alone you may magnify the Lord. You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust his name, and be calm, and so magnify him. Or, you may be no traveller, and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that.

> "Where'er we seek him he is found,
> And every place is hallowed ground";

and in every place this hallowed occupation may be carried out, and we may always say—at least the place will not prevent our saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, *it can be fitly performed in solitude.* I suppose that this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elisabeth. There is a quorum for God's praise even where there is only one; but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceeding sweet. Ah, my dear sisters, you will never stand up to speak to thousands, and many of my brethren now present would be very timid if they had to praise the Lord before a score. Never mind about that. Praise does not require even two or three, but in the quiet of the night, or in the loneliness of the wood far away from the haunts of men, your soul may pursue this blessed task, and daily, hourly, constantly sing—"My soul doth magnify the Lord."

This is an occupation also, dear friends, which *requires no money.* Mary was a poor maiden. She had no gold or silver, and yet did she sweetly say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." It is an honourable thing to be entrusted with this world's treasure to lay it out for Jesus. The church has its temporal needs, and happy is that man who is privileged to supply them: but this kind of work can be followed by the child who has no money, and by the workwoman who scarcely knows how to find herself in bread. It may be followed by the poor man reduced to the workhouse; and by the poor woman who lies in the infirmary breathing out her life. "My soul doth magnify the Lord," is as fit for paupers as for peers. Oh! these are golden notes, and those that use them have golden mouths, as golden as Chrysostom of old, even though they have to say, "Silver and gold have I none."

And this is an occupation, dear friends, which I commend to all here present, because *it does not require great talent.* A simpleton may sing "My soul doth magnify the Lord." We have each one a soul, and when that soul has been renewed by grace it can follow this blessed pursuit of magnifying the Lord. Perhaps you have not the abilities of Mary, for she was, doubtless, a woman of considerable culture, like Hannah who preceded her, whose song she partly borrowed. Hannah seems to me to be one of the most gifted women of the Old Testament, and to be worthy of more notice than is generally given to her. But if you could not write a hymn, if you could not compose a verse, if you have no ability that way, ay, and if you cannot sing—and there are some of us that have such cracked voices that we never shall, and there are one or two brethren here who have such bad ears for time that I

generally hear them a note behind everybody else, as I did to-night—well, never mind about that, our souls can magnify the Lord. It is an occupation that does not depend upon the voice, or upon any kind of talent whatever. Those who sing worst to the ear of man may, perhaps, sing best to the ear of God; and those who have the least apparent ability may, from the warmth of their heart and the ardour of their devotion, really have the greatest capacity in God's judgment for magnifying his name.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." I would invite all my brothers and sisters here to take this for their occupation as long as they live, and never to cease from it. Nay, even should death for a moment suspend it, let them so praise God that it shall be no new work for them to begin again and praise him for ever in heaven.

Dear friends, albeit that this magnifying of the Lord is an occupation to be taken up by all Christians, do not let us think little of it. To magnify the Lord seems to me *the grandest thing we mortals do*, for, as I have already said, it is the occupation of heaven. When the saints of the Most High pass into their glorified state they have nothing else to do but to magnify the Lord. The word signifies, to put it in a Saxon form instead of a Latin one, to "greaten God." We cannot make him really greater, but we can show forth his greatness. We can make him appear greater. We can make others have greater thoughts of him, and that we do when we are praising him. We can ourselves try to have greater and yet greater thoughts of him—make him to our apprehension a greater God than we once knew him to be; and this, I say, is no mean occupation, because it is followed in heaven by all redeemed and perfected spirits. Even here, it is the end of everything. Praying is the end of preaching, for preaching and hearing are nothing in themselves except men be brought to Christ and led to prayer. But then praying is not the end: praising is the end of praying. Prayer is the stalk of the wheat, but praise is the ear of the wheat: it is the harvest itself. When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed. We are to be saved for this end, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." We are not saved for our own sakes. How often does the Scripture tell us this in sense, and sometimes in words, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." The glory of God is to my mind the highest conceivable end—it certainly is the chief end—of my being. So, my dear brother, if you cannot go out to preach—if after looking over all your condition you feel that your sickness and other circumstances may excuse you from active service, and even if you are compelled to keep your bed, do not suppose that you are useless as to the highest end of your being. You may still serve it by lying upon the couch of pain and magnifying the Lord by patience. Have you ever looked at those lovely lilies which adorn our gardens with their golden petals and their milk-white leaves? How they praise God! And yet they never sing. You do not even hear a rustle, but they stand still and praise God by existing—by just, as it were, enjoying the sun and the dew, and showing what God can do. A genuine Christian shut up under pain and sickness may

glorify God by being his beloved child, by receiving the love of God, by showing in his common-place daily character, which is only noticeable from its holiness, what the grace of God can do. Oh may this be the occupation of us all since it is so noble a pursuit! "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Come, what are you doing to-night? Have you been during this day murmuring and complaining and grumbling? End that, and begin praising. Some of you are farmers, and I have no doubt you have grumbled because of the weather. I do not wonder, but I hope that you will not do it any more, but rather believe that God knows better about skies and clods and clouds and crops than you do. If we had the management of the weather, I have no doubt we think we should do it very splendidly, but I question whether we should not ruin all creation. Our great Lord and Master knows how to manage everything. Let us cease from all criticism of what he does, and say, "My soul does not grumble. My soul does not complain; I have taken up a better business than that. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' That is her one engagement from which she will never cease."

II. Secondly, if you look at the text from another point of view, it provides for us A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION.

If any one of us had been favoured, as the Virgin was, with the promise that we should become the *parent of the Saviour*, do you not think that we should have felt exceedingly lifted up? It was natural that she should be proud, but it was gracious on her part that she was humble. Instead of magnifying herself she magnified the Lord. It was a great thing, and somebody must be magnified for it. Nature would have said, "Mary, magnify thyself"; but grace said, "Mary, magnify the Lord." If the Lord has been very gracious to any one of us, our only way to escape from vain-glorious pride, which will be exceedingly wicked if we indulge in it, is by giving vent to our feelings in quite another direction. Do you notice how she sets off the greatness of God by her own insignificance? "He that is mighty hath done to me great things." "To me," she says. "They are great things, and he is mighty, but they are to me. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Over against the greatness of God's goodness to you be sure to set in contrast your own meanness and unworthiness. Has the Lord redeemed you, called you, justified you, sanctified you, set you in his church, and given you a name and a place among his people? When you are inclined to run up the topgallants, and to hang out all the flags, and to glory in your flesh, recollect who you are and what you are, and the hole of the pit whence you were drawn, and the rock out of which you were hewn, and say, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" Begin to magnify the name of the Lord, and that will be a death-blow to the temptation to pride.

Mary had *a specialty:* no one else should be the mother of our Lord: but so have we. Electing love has pitched on us. Many have been passed by, but the Lord has loved us with a special love; yet we cannot rejoice in it so as to glory in ourselves, for this election is according to his sovereign will, and not of ourselves. It is all of grace and free favour, and not according to merit. Hence my soul doth magnify the Lord for everlasting love and special redemption. Whence is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou, O Lord, shouldst choose me?

Mary knew also that she was *to be famous*. "All generations shall call me blessed." But do notice how she balances her fame with another fame. She says, "Holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him." She magnifies the name of the Lord. If he has given her a measure of honour, she lays it at his feet. Mind you do the same. Be not so vain as to be lifted up with a little success. We have all passed through this test of character, and in the fining-pot how few of us have borne the fire without loss! Perhaps you have preached a sermon and God has blessed it; the congregation is increased, and crowds are gathering; the probability is that the devil whispers, "You are a capital preacher. Well done! You put your point admirably: God is blessing you. There must be something admirable in your character and abilities." Away, away, thou fiend of the pit! This is ruinous pride! But suppose, dear brother, that the fiend will not go away while he finds you musing upon your success, what are you to do? Try him with this—"My soul doth magnify the Lord." Praise the name of the Lord that ever he should make use of such a poor, unsuitable instrument as yourself. Give him all the honour and all the glory, if honour and glory there be, and see if the arch-enemy does not take to flight, for God's praises are abhorrent to the devil.

In whatever capacity you are serving the Lord, if he puts any honour upon you, mind you give it all back to him. Sedulously and carefully endeavour to do this, for robbery here will be fatal; he will not give his glory to another. If we begin to pilfer even a little of the praise, we shall find that our Master will reckon us to be unfaithful stewards, and give us a discharge. If we glory in our strength, we may have to go out and shake ourselves like Samson when his hair was lost, because the Lord has taken our strength away from us. A heart that is lifted up with self-esteem will soon be cast down in the mire. Mary knew that God's favours are given to us, not that we may congratulate ourselves, but that we may worship him; and she acted accordingly. If grace be come to thee, my brother, it is a wanton waste of it to pride thyself upon it. Like the manna in the Israelite's house when kept till the morning, it will breed worms and stink: no worm ever brought swifter decay than pride. Bear the shield of thine honour as an armour-bearer for thy Lord. Know that thou hast nothing but what belongs to him. Use all for him, and glorify him for all, and in all; and so wilt thou do well. I recommend the text, then, as a cure for pride: "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

III. Thirdly, and I will be brief on each point, the text is A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. "My soul doth magnify the Lord," is evidently the overflow of a full soul.

There must have been great mixture of feeling in the heart of this holy woman; but these few words furnished expression for every variety of her emotions. Those feelings were of an opposite character, and yet they all spoke by this one sentence. It is clear that she was filled with *wonder*. Her thoughtful spirit asked, how can so great a thing be true to me? Shall the Son of the Highest be born of Mary, the village maiden? Oh, miracle of condescension! With the amazement there was mingled, not the unbelief which too often comes of wonder, but an *expectation* of the promised marvel. She believed that the things which

were spoken to her would be performed by the Lord, and she looked that God should keep his word to her. How sweetly those two feelings, wonder and expectation, are blended, hidden away and yet expressed, in these few words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord"! It is as though she had said, "I cannot understand the favour promised me. How glorious in his grace is the Lord my God! But I expect the blessing: I am sure of it, for the Lord is true! So I praise him concerning it." The sentence is tinged with two fair colours, the vermilion of wonder and the azure of hope, and they meet harmoniously upon the same ground. The words are wonderful on that account.

Now take two other mental states. The first would be her *believing*. She was not like Zacharias, who needed to be struck dumb because he doubted the word of the Lord. Mary had faith, and yet, at the same time she must have been *awe-stricken* by the revelation. That she should give birth to the Son of the Highest must have utterly abashed and overwhelmed her. Now both these states of mind are here—faith and awe. Faith says, "I know that the angel's message is true, and therefore my soul doth magnify the Lord." Awe says, "What a solemn thing it is that God should come to dwell in my breast! My soul doth magnify the Lord." Thus in these words confidence and reverence have met together, assurance and adoration have kissed each other. Here is faith with its familiarity, and devotion with its godly fear.

Here, also, you very clearly perceive two other holy emotions. Her *humility* is apparent, and in the text it seems to ask the question, "How can this happen to me? How can it be that such a poor woman, affianced to a humble carpenter, should be the mother of my Lord?" Humility sheds its perfume here, like a violet hidden away. She seems to say, "Not unto me, not unto me be the glory! My soul doth magnify the Lord." But that humility is not of the cringing and crouching kind which draws back from God, for it is clearly mixed with *love*. "I rejoice in my gracious Lord," she seems to say, "I bless him: I love him: I praise him. My soul doth magnify the Lord. I am not worthy of his promised visitation, but it will be mine, and infinite condescension will do this thing unto me. Therefore do I love my God, and I draw near to him. My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Brothers and sisters, you will often find the language of my text the most expressive of utterances for all that is good in your minds. Many sweet passions, like little birds, may fold their wings, and dwell together in this one well-compacted nest,—"My soul doth magnify the Lord." Holy emotions may fly hither in swarms, and make the text like a hive of bees, stored with honey. As I turn and think it over, it sheds abroad its own spirit within me, as spices breathe out their own perfume, and I cry, "My soul doth magnify him."

I think I perceive in these words a singular mixture of *admiration* and *calm thought*: a wonder in which there is no surprise. The blessed Virgin is evidently, as I have said before, wonder-struck that such a thing should come to her, and yet there is about that wonder no startling of amazement, but a marvelling which is the result of previous careful thought. She had considered the prophecies and promises, and saw them about to be fulfilled in her seed. She sang in the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth verses, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance

of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." She had turned over the subject in her mind, and she came to the conclusion, "He has said he will do this. It is as he spake." So, oftentimes, when you get a mercy given to you, you will be surprised at it at first, but afterwards you will say, "This is even as the Lord promised to me. He doeth no new thing to his servant. It is only my forgetfulness that has made me to be astonished. Did he not promise that he would help me—that he would deliver me—that he would give me all that I needed? And inasmuch as he has done it in this surprising way, my soul doth magnify him twice over for the wonderful mercy, and for the faithfulness of his covenant love which kept the ancient promise which he made to be yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Again, I say, I commend the text as an expression of your feelings. How sweet are the words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord"! They are full, many-sided, and natural, and yet most spiritual.

IV. Fourthly, I think my text may be used as A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS.

It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to everything. The mood which bids us sing "My soul doth magnify the Lord" is full of a hope which will be useful in a thousand ways. For instance, concerning *our own providential condition*, let us magnify the Lord. Surrounded with difficulties, let us walk on with confidence, because our great God is equal to every emergency, and can both level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Burdened with labours and stripped by necessities, let us maintain an unchanging cheerfulness, because we magnify the might and the bounty of the eternal Jehovah, whose name is God All-sufficient. When danger is magnified by fear, let God be magnified by faith. When the troubles of our heart are enlarged, let our expectations from the Lord be enlarged also.

The same God-magnifying spirit should attend *our glances into futurity*, if we indulge in any, and we are all too apt to do so. Ah! we would like to know, some of us, what is going to happen to us. Fain would we steal a glance behind the screen, and each one see

> "What gloomy lines are writ for me,
> Or what dark scenes arise."

There is a desire in most persons' minds to draw away the curtain which God has so wisely placed over the future. This is very wrong of us, and yet it is as common as it is blamable. We all turn prophets every now and then, and when we do we prophesy evil, and therefore it would be well if we could catch the spirit of Mary with regard to our forecasts of the future, and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Why do we set our blear-eyed anxieties to watch the signs of heaven? If we must pry, and guess, and speculate, why not employ our brighter powers, and let blue-eyed hope scan the ensigns of the sky? When we meddle with the future how dare we foretell that which would dishonour the Lord? If we must needs write bitter things against ourselves, yet we ought not to write untruthful things against *him*. When we do forecast the future at all, let us do it in the spirit wherewith we sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Let us be certain that we shall find him to be a great God in the future, greatly good, wondrously

gracious, magnifying his mercy. We shall have troubles, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she foresees that we shall ride out all storms with Jesus at the helm, and come safe into port. Our anxious eye foresees necessities, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sees him with a golden key opening the treasures of David, and supplying all her wants. Our troubled ear can hear the wolf, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sings, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and he will preserve me." In this spirit you may look forward to the swellings of Jordan, magnifying the living God while you yourself lie down to die. If you faint and begin to say, "Ah! I shall never be able to die triumphantly," you are minimizing, and not magnifying, the Lord. You are making him little, and not great. Try and say, "How marvellously will he show his grace to me, a dying worm! Oh, how wondrous he will be in the eyes of angels that will crowd the banks to hear a poor trembling soul like me go singing through the stream! My God will be great in that day; then will he lay bare his arm, and therefore will I fear no evil, for he will be with me; his rod and his staff will comfort me." Think great things of God. Greaten God. Magnify his name whenever you look forward to the future. Chase from your mind any imagination or foreboding which would detract from the greatness or the goodness of your God.

Judge in the same manner with regard to *the salvation of your fellow-men.* Never say, "It is of no use inducing such a man to attend the means of grace. He is a blaspheming wretch. All that he would do if he heard a sermon would be to make sport of it for the next week. I have no faith in taking such a man to hear a ministry which he would be sure to ridicule." Such unbelieving talk is making little of God. Is it not so? Is it not dishonouring God to think that his gospel cannot reach the most depraved hearts? Why, if I knew that a man had seven thousand devils in him, I believe the gospel could drive them all out. Get the sinners under the sound of the word, and the worse they are, oftentimes, the more does God love to display the greatness of his grace in casting down the power of their sin. Believe great things of God. I can honestly say this—that since God saved me I never doubted his power to save anybody. All things are possible now that he has brought *me* to his feet, and kept me these years as his loving child. I must think great things of God who has done such great things for so great a sinner as I am. Greaten God, my brethren; greaten God. Believe great things of him. Believe that China can be made into a province of the celestial kingdom. Believe that India will cast her riches at Jesus' feet. Believe that the round world will yet be a pearl on Christ's finger-ring. Do not go in for the dispiriting, despairing, unmanly, un-Christly ideas of those who say, "The world is not to be converted. It is a poor wreck that will go to pieces, and we are to fish off here and there one from the water-logged hulk." Brethren, never believe that we are to stand by and see the eternal defeat of God. Deem not that our God is unable to win upon the old lines, and must needs shift the plan of the campaign. It shall never be said that God could not save the world by the preaching of the gospel, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore must needs bring in the advent of the Lord to do it. I believe in the coming of the Lord, but, blessed

be his name, I believe also that the battle which he has begun in the Spirit he will fight out in the old style, and finish with a victory in the very manner in which he opened the conflict. It pleases him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and it will please him to continue to do so till the whole round earth shall ring with hallelujahs of praise to the grace of God, who by the feeblest of his creatures shall have defeated sin, and death, and hell. Do not get into a desponding state of mind, and rush into half-insane theories of prophecy in order to excuse your unbelief and idleness. Never throw down your weapons, and pretend that the victory is to be won by doting and dreaming: we are to fight to the end with the same weapons, and in the same name. We will drive the devil out of the world yet, by the grace of God, by the old, efficient weapons of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Greaten God, and magnify his name, by believing in the success of the gospel of his dear Son.

As to *the nearer future*, never believe any human prophecy that does not glorify God. Expect great things of God, and if you hear any prediction that is not to the glory of God, conclude that it is a blunder. "Oh!" said one to me, "this country will go back to Romanism: the gospel light will be quenched in England." Ah, dear me! Some brethren are mightily fond of this prognostication. But, my dear friend, there is one thing that always comforts me, namely, that God is not dead: and he is not going to be defeated by the pope of Rome, or fifty popes of Rome. He will win the victory yet. Always have courage, for it is God's cause, and it is in God's hands, and, being in God's hands, it is safe enough. See what you do:—because you cannot trust God's hand you trust your own! You thrust out your sacrilegious arm to interfere with God's peculiar work. What are you at? You are about to defile God's ark. Recollect the story of Uzzah. Pluck your hand back, and leave the ark alone. The Lord will help you to do such work as he gives you to do, but he has not made you Lord of empires, nor director of providence. Leave to his sovereign sway the purposes of his eternal grace, and depend upon it he will bring the world to Jesus' feet. Christ himself shall come: be you looking for him every day, but be constant in his service, working for him every hour. Believe, too, that he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and where amidst Judea's glades Christ has been dishonoured and the false prophet has ruled, there too shall he reign, and Jew and Gentile shall worship and adore his ever-blessed name. I say again, magnify the Lord with all your souls. Greaten God. Expect great things in the future, and with the cheery note of confidence go forward to battle for him whose is the victory for ever and ever.

V. Once more, and I have done. Our text should be used as a GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. We will finish with that. Here is a very useful test for young disciples who are beginning to study God's word. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." If you will carry this with you it will often save you from error, and guide you into truth. There is a certain teaching which makes a great deal of man: it talks much of man's free-will, ability, capacity, and natural dignity. It evidently makes man the centre and end of all things, and God is placed in a position of service to his creature. As for the Fall: father Adam slipped

and broke his little finger, or something of the kind, but this theology sees no great ruin as the result of the fall. As for salvation: it is a slight cure for a small ill, and by no means the infinite grace which we consider it to be. Dear brethren, let those have this theology who like it, but do not you touch it even with a pair of tongs. It is of no use to man, for it mistakes his position, and only ministers to his pride. Man's place is not on the throne, but at the foot of the cross. Listen to another theology, in which the sinner is laid low, his sinfulness is exposed, his corruption is unfolded, Christ's redemption is magnified, free grace is extolled, and the Holy Ghost is adored. That is the theology for you, believe it: that is the theology of the Scriptures, accept it. I do not think that you will often be led wrong if this be your mode of judgment: that which glorifies God is true, and that which does not glorify God is false.

Sometimes you will meet with an undoubted teaching of God's word which you do not understand. You know that the doctrine is taught in the word, but you cannot make it coincide with some other truth, and you cannot quite see, perhaps, how it glorifies God. Then, dear brother, dear sister, glorify God by believing it. To believe a doctrine which you see to be true by mere reason is nothing very wonderful. There is no very great glory to God in believing what is as clear as the sun in the heavens; but to believe a truth when it staggers you—oh, gracious faith! oh, blessed faith! You will perhaps remember an illustration taken from Mr. Gough, where the little boy says, "If mother says it is so, it is so if it is not so." That is the kind of believing for a child towards its mother, and that is the sort of believing we ought to exercise towards God. I do not see the fact, and I cannot quite apprehend it, but God says it is so, and I believe *him*. If all the philosophers in the world should contradict the Scriptures, so much the worse for the philosophers; their contradiction makes no difference to our faith. Half a grain of God's word weighs more with us than a thousand tons of words or thoughts of all the modern theologians, philosophers, and scientists that exist on the face of the earth; for God knows more about his own works than they do. They do but think, but the Lord knows. With regard to truths which philosophers ought not to meddle with, because they have not specially turned their thoughts that way, they are not more qualified to judge than the poorest man in the church of God, nay, nor one-half so much. Inasmuch as the most learned unregenerate men are dead in sin, what do they know about the living things of the children of God? Instead of setting them to judge we will sooner trust our boys and girls that are just converted, for they do know something of divine things, but carnal philosophers know nothing of them. Do not be staggered, brothers and sisters, but honour God, glorify God, and magnify him by believing great things and unsearchable—past your finding out—which you know to be true because he declares them to be so. Let the *ipse dixit* of God stand to you in the place of all reason, being indeed the highest and purest reason, for God, the Infallible, speaks what must be true.

So, then, I come back to where I started. Let us go forth and practically try to magnify the name of the Lord. Go home and speak well of his name: gather your children together and tell them what a good

and great God he has been. Some of you who have a swarm of youngsters could not do better than spend half an hour in telling them of his goodness to you in all your times of trouble. Leave to your children the heirloom of gratitude. Tell them how good the Lord was to their father, and how good he will be to his children: tell your servants, tell your work-people, tell anybody with whom you come in contact what a blessed God the Lord is. For my part, I never can speak well enough of his adorable name. He is the best of masters, his service is delight; he is the best of fathers, his commands are pleasure. Was there ever such a god as our God, our enemies themselves being judges?

Magnify his name by the brightness of your countenances. Rejoice and be glad in him. When you are in sorrow and must needs fast, yet appear not unto men to fast, but anoint your faces and still wear a smile. Let not the world think that the servants of a king go mourning all their days. Make the world feel what a great God you serve, and what a blessed Saviour Christ is, and thus evermore let your soul magnify the Lord. God grant you grace to do so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxiv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—174, 775.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Your continued prayers are sought for the SPECIAL SERVICES at the Tabernacle, that by their success any injury occurring through the Pastor's enforced absence may be remedied. It would be an affliction indeed if our life-work should suffer through painful sickness, which in itself is a heavy cross to bear. By your prayers this will be averted, and the trial will be turned into a blessing.

Right thankful am I to report rapid, and I trust real, progress in my own case. Living in an unbroken series of summer days, where no cold mists are dreamed of, it is no great marvel that rheumatic pains fly away, and depression of spirit departs. The healing Lord has breathed a restoring influence over land, and sea, and sky, and I am feeling it to my great joy. Hoping soon to be among my own people, and to issue sermons newly preached,

I am, to my many hearty friends, their grateful servant,

Mentone, Jan. 8, 1880. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A WOMAN OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." —1 Samuel i. 15.

THE special cause of Hannah's sorrow arose from the institution of polygamy, which, although it was tolerated under the old law, is always exhibited to us in practical action as a most fruitful source of sorrow and sin. In no one recorded instance in Holy Scripture is it set forth as admirable; and in most cases the proofs of its evil effects lie open to the sun. Lamech leads the way, and he is a homicide descended of the murderous house of Cain, and the father of Tubal-cain, or Vulcan, the fashioner of weapons of destruction: never was this institution the harbinger of peace, but the favourer of strife. We ought to be grateful that under the Christian religion that abomination has been wiped away; for even with such husbands as Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon it did not work towards happiness or righteousness. The husband found the system a heavy burden, grievous to be borne, for he soon found out the truth of the wise man's advice to the Sultan, "First learn to live with two tigresses, and then expect to live happily with two wives." The wife must in nearly every case have felt the wretchedness of sharing a love which ought to be all her own. What miseries eastern women have suffered in the harem none can tell, or perhaps imagine. In the case before us, Elkanah had trouble enough through wearing the double chain, but still the heaviest burden fell upon his beloved Hannah, the better of his two wives. The worse the woman the better she could get on with the system of many wives, but the good woman, the true woman, was sure to smart under it. Though dearly loved by her husband, the jealousy of the rival wife embittered Hannah's life, and made her "a woman of a sorrowful spirit." We thank God that no longer is the altar of God covered with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, of those wives of youth who find their husbands' hearts estranged and divided by other wives. Because of the hardness of their hearts the evil was tolerated for a while, but the many evils which sprang of it should suffice to put a ban upon it among all who seek the welfare of

our race. In the beginning the Lord made for man but one wife. And wherefore one? For he had the residue of the spirit, and could have breathed into as many as he pleased. Malachi answers, "That he might seek a godly seed." As if it was quite clear that the children of polygamy would be ungodly, and only in the house of one man and one wife would godliness be found. This witness is of the Lord, and is true.

But enough sources of grief remain; more than enough; and there is not in any household, I suppose, however joyous, the utter absence of the cross. The worldling says, "There is a skeleton in every house." I know little about such dead things, but I know that a cross of some sort or other must be borne by every child of God. All the true-born heirs of heaven must pass under the rod of the covenant. What son is there whom the Father chasteneth not? The smoking furnace is part of the insignia of the heavenly family, without which a man may well question whether he stands in covenant relationship to God at all. Probably some Hannah is now before me, smarting under the chastening hand of God, some child of light walking in darkness, some daughter of Abraham bowed down by Satan, and it may not be amiss to remind her that she is not the first of her kind, but that in years gone by there stood at the door of God's house one like to her, who said of herself "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." May the ever-blessed Comforter, whose work lies mainly with the sorrowful, fill our meditation with consolation at this time.

I. In speaking of this "woman of a sorrowful spirit" we shall make this first remark - that MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS MAY BE CONNECTED WITH A SORROWFUL SPIRIT. In itself, a sorrowful spirit is not to be desired. Give us the bright eye, the cheerful smile, the vivacious manner, the genial tone. If we do not desire mirth and merriment, yet give us at least that calm peace, that quiet composure, that restful happiness which makes home happy wherever it pervades the atmosphere. There are wives, mothers, and daughters who should exhibit more of these cheerful graces than they now do, and they are very blamable for being petulant, unkind, and irritable; but there are others, I doubt not, who labour to their utmost to be all that is delightful, and yet fail in the attempt, because, like Hannah, they are of a sorrowful spirit, and cannot shake off the grief which burdens their heart. Now, it is idle to tell the night that it should be brilliant as the day, or bid the winter put on the flowers of summer; and equally vain is it to chide the broken heart. The bird of night cannot sing at heaven's gate, nor can the crushed worm leap like a hart up on the mountains. It is of little use exhorting the willow whose branches weep by the river to lift up its head like the palm, or spread its branches like the cedar: everything must act according to its kind; each nature hath its own appropriate ways, nor can it escape the bonds of its fashioning. There are circumstances of constitution, education, and surroundings which render it difficult for some very excellent persons to be cheerful: they are predestined to be known by such a name as this—"A woman of a sorrowful spirit."

Note well the precious things which went in Hannah's case with a sorrowful spirit. The first was true godliness: *she was a godly woman.* As we read the chapter, we are thoroughly certified that her heart was right with God. We cannot raise any question about the sincerity of

her prayer, or the prevalence of it. We do not doubt for a moment the truthfulness of her holy joy, the confidence of her faith, or the strength of her consecration. She was one that feared God above many, an eminently gracious woman, and yet "a woman of a sorrowful spirit." Never draw the inference from sorrow that the subject of it is not beloved of God. You might more safely reason in the opposite way, though it would not be always safe to do so, for outward circumstances are poor tests of a man's spiritual state. Certainly Dives, in his scarlet and fine linen, was not beloved of God, while Lazarus, with the dogs licking his sores, was a favourite of heaven: and yet it is not every rich man that is cast away, or every beggar that will be borne aloft by angels. Outward condition can lead us to no determination one way or another. Hearts must be judged, conduct and actions must be weighed, and a verdict given otherwise than by the outward appearance. Many persons feel very happy, but they must not therefore infer that God loves them; while certain others are sadly depressed, but it would be most cruel to suggest to them that God is angry with them. It is never said, "whom the Lord loveth he enricheth," but it is said, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Affliction and suffering are not proofs of sonship, for "many sorrows shall be to the wicked"; and yet, where there are great tribulations, it often happens that there are great manifestations of the divine favour. There is a sorrow of the world that worketh death—a sorrow which springs from self-will, and is nurtured in rebellion, and is therefore an evil thing, because it is opposed to the divine will. There is a sorrow which eats as doth a canker, and breeds yet greater sorrows, so that such mourners descend with their sorrowful spirits down to the place where sorrow reigns supreme, and hope shall never come. Think of this, but never doubt the fact that a sorrowful spirit is in perfect consistency with the love of God, and the possession of true godliness. It is freely admitted that godliness ought to cheer many a sorrowful spirit more than it does. It is also admitted that much of the experience of Christians is not Christian experience, but a mournful departure from what true believers ought to be and feel. There is very much that Christians experience which they never ought to experience. Half the troubles of life are home-made, and utterly unnecessary. We afflict ourselves, perhaps, ten times more than God afflicts us. We add many thongs to God's whip: when there would be but one we must needs make nine. God sends one cloud by his providence, and we raise a score by our unbelief. But taking all that off, and making the still further abatement that the gospel commands us to rejoice in the Lord always, and that it would never bid us do so if there were not abundant causes and arguments for it, yet, for all that, a sorrowful spirit may be possessed by one who most truly and deeply fears the Lord. Never judge those whom you see sad, and write them down as under the divine anger, for you might err most grievously and most cruelly in making so rash a judgment. Fools despise the afflicted, but wise men prize them. Many of the sweetest flowers in the garden of grace grow in the shade, and flourish in the drip. True, there are children of the tropical sun, whose beauty and fragrance could only be produced by having bathed themselves in the golden flood, and these, in certain respects, must always stand in the forefront, yet are there

choice flowerets to whom the unshaded sun would be death. They prefer a sheltered bank, or a ravine in the forest, under the shadow of the thick boughs, where a softened, mellowed light developes them to perfection. I am persuaded that he "who feedeth among the lilies" has rare plants in his flora, fair and fragrant, choice and comely, which are more at home in the damps of mourning than in the glaring sun of joy. I have known such, who have been a living lesson to us all, from their broken-hearted penitence, their solemn earnestness, their jealous watchfulness, their sweet humility, and their gentle love. These are lilies of the valley, bearing a wealth of beauty pleasant even to the King himself. Feeble as to assurance, and to be pitied for their timidity, yet have they been lovely in their despondencies, and graceful in their holy anxieties. These are not pearls with the mild radiance of peace, nor rubies with the ruddy hue of ardour, nor sapphires with the bright blue of joy, nor emeralds with the restfulness of confidence; but diamonds of the first water, incarnate drops of sorrow, clear and transparent, and soon to be set amongst the brightest gems in the Redeemer's diadem. Hannah, then, possessed godliness despite her sorrow.

In connection with this sorrowful spirit of hers Hannah was *a lovable woman*. Her husband greatly delighted in her. That she had no children was to him no depreciation of her value. He said, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" He evidently felt that he would do anything in his power to uplift the gloom from her spirit. This fact is worth noting, for it does so happen that many sorrowful people are far from being lovable people. In too many instances their griefs have soured them. Their affliction has generated acid in their hearts, and with that acrid acid they bite into everything they touch; their temper has more of the oil of vitriol in it than of the oil of brotherly love. Nobody ever had any trouble except themselves, they brook no rival in the realm of suffering, but persecute their fellow-sufferers with a kind of jealousy, as if they alone were the brides of suffering, and others were mere intruders. Every other person's sorrow is a mere fancy, or make-believe, compared with theirs. They sit alone, and keep silence; or when they speak, their silence would have been preferable. It is a pity it should be so, and yet so it is that men and women of a sorrowful spirit are frequently to be met with who are unloving and unlovable. The more heartily, therefore, do I admire in true Christian people the grace which sweetens them so that the more they suffer themselves the more gentle and patient they become with other sufferers, and the more ready to bear whatever trouble may be involved in the necessities of compassion. Beloved, if you are much tried and troubled, and if you are much depressed in spirit, entreat the Lord to prevent your becoming a kill-joy to others. Remember your Master's rule, "And thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast." I say not that our Lord spoke the word with the exact meaning I am now giving to it, but it is a kindred sense. Be cheerful even when your heart is sad. There is no need that the world should be hung in black because I wear crape on my hat. It is not necessary that every heart should be heavy because I am burdened; of what use would that be to me or to any one else? For my own part, for the sake of sick and sorrowful people, I am sorry when I hear the knell from the church tower

intruding a death-note into every mourner's ear, and all perhaps because some heir of glory has risen to the throne of God and of the Lamb. That bell with solemn toll, no doubt, has a voice to the careless, and so far so good, but as the stern voice of melancholy, it is an offence against Christianity, importing that all death is doleful, and causing the sick upon their beds to feel more mournful than needs be. Publish good news. Ring the joy-bells as loudly as you will; but there is no particular need to be everlastingly pestering everybody with your griefs. No, let us try to be cheerful that we may be lovable, even if we still remain of a sorrowful spirit. Self and our own personal woes must not be our life-psalm, nor our daily discourse. Others must be thought of, and in their joys we must try to sympathize. Patience must put self into the background, and love must bring our friends to the front. We have a God to serve, an age to bless, a family to train, a circle of friends to benefit; and these things must none of them be disregarded. If we thus put duty before complaining, and the doing of good before the craving for sympathy, we shall win much love, and among those who are prized and sought after none will be preferred to the man or woman of a sorrowful spirit.

In Hannah's case, too, the woman of a sorrowful spirit was *a very gentle woman.* Peninnah with her harsh, and haughty, and arrogant speech vexed her sore to make her fret, but we do not find that she answered her. At the annual festival, when Peninnah had provoked her most, she stole away to the sanctuary to weep alone, for she was very tender and submissive. When Eli said, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee," she did not answer him tartly, as she might well have done. Her answer to the aged priest is a model of gentleness. She most effectually cleared herself, and plainly refuted the harsh imputation, but she made no retort, and murmured no charge of injustice. She did not tell him that he was ungenerous in having thought so harshly, nor was there anger in her grief. She excused his mistake. He was an old man. It was his duty to see that worship was fitly conducted, and, if he judged her to be in a wrong state, it was but faithfulness on his part to make the remark; and she took it, therefore, in the spirit in which she thought he offered it. At any rate, she bore the rebuke without resentment or repining. Now, some sad people are very tart, very sharp, very severe, and, if you misjudge them at all, they inveigh against your cruelty with the utmost bitterness. You are the unkindest of men if you think them less than perfect. With what an air and tone of injured innocence will they vindicate themselves! You have committed worse than blasphemy if you have ventured to hint a fault. I am not about to blame them, for we might be as ungentle as they if we were to be too severe in our criticism on the sharpness which springs of sorrow; but it is very beautiful when the afflicted are full of sweetness and light, and like the sycamore figs are ripened by their bruising. When their own bleeding wound makes them tender of wounding others, and their own hurt makes them more ready to bear what of hurt may come through the mistakes of others, then have we a lovely proof that "sweet are the uses of adversity." Dear friends, whether you are men or women of a sorrowful spirit, will you kindly recollect that your infirmity is likely to be peevishness, and that your temptation will probably be towards sharpness of temper? Therefore, watch against

these things, and ask God especially to give you a gentle spirit and a quiet tongue. Look at your Lord. Oh that we all would look at him, who when he was reviled reviled not again, and who, when they mocked him, had not a word of upbraiding, but answered by his prayers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." See you not that much that is precious may go with a sorrowful spirit?

There was more, however, than I have shown you, for Hannah was *a thoughtful woman*, for her sorrow drove her first within herself, and next into much communion with her God. That she was a highly thoughtful woman appears in everything she says. She does not pour out that which first comes to hand. The product of her mind is evidently that which only a cultivated soil could yield. I will not just now speak of her song, further than to say that for loftiness of majesty and fulness of true poetry it is equal to anything from the pen of that sweet psalmist of Israel, David himself. The Virgin Mary evidently followed in the wake of this great poetess, this mistress of the lyric art.

Remember, also, that though she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, she was *a blessed woman*. I might fitly say of her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured! The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." The daughters of Belial could laugh and make merry, and regard her as the dust beneath their feet, but yet had she with her sorrowful spirit found grace in the sight of the Lord. There was Peninnah, with her quiver full of children, exulting over the barren mourner, yet was not Peninnah blessed, while Hannah, with all her griefs, was dear unto the Lord. She seems to be somewhat like him of another age, of whom we read that Jabez was more honourable than his brethren because his mother bare him with sorrow. Sorrow brings a wealth of blessing with it when the Lord consecrates it; and if one had to take his position with the merry, or with the mournful, he would do well to take counsel of Solomon, who said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." A present flash is seen in the mirth of the world, but there is vastly more true light to be found in the griefs of Christians. When you see how the Lord sustains and sanctifies his people by their afflictions, the darkness glows into noonday.

It is now clear that much that is precious may go with a sorrowful spirit. Let none of you despise the downcast, and never think harshly of those who are sad. If we be sorrowful ourselves, let us not write bitter things against ourselves, but hope in God under all discouragements; for we shall yet praise him who is the health of our countenance and our God.

II. We come now to a second remark, which is that MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS MAY COME OUT OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT: it is not only to be found with it, but may even grow out of it.

Observe, first, that through her sorrowful spirit Hannah *had learned to pray*. I will not say but what she prayed before this great sorrow struck her, but this I know, she prayed with more intensity than before when she heard her rival talk so exceeding proudly, and saw herself to be utterly despised. Oh! brothers and sisters, if you have a secret grief learn where to carry it, and delay not to take it there. Learn from Hannah. Her appeal was to the Lord. She poured not out the secret of her soul into mortal ear, but spread her grief before God in his own house, and in his own appointed manner. She was in bitterness of soul

and prayed to the Lord. Bitterness of soul should always be thus sweetened. Many are in bitterness of soul, but they do not pray, and therefore the taste of the wormwood remains: O that they were wise, and looked upon their sorrows as the divine call for prayer, the cloud which brings a shower of supplication! Our troubles should be steeds upon which we ride to God; rough winds which hurry our barque into the haven of all-prayer. When the heart is merry we may sing psalms, but concerning the afflicted it is written, "Let him pray." Thus, bitterness of spirit may be an index of our need of prayer, and an incentive to that holy exercise. When a live coal from off the altar touches our lips we should preach, but when a drop of gall falls on the lips we should pray. I fear, my brethren, that our best prayers are born in the house of mourning. In too many cases ease and health bring a chill over supplication, and there is a needs be for a stirring of the fire with the rough iron of trial. Many a flower reserves its odour till the rough wind waves it to and fro, and shakes out its fragrance. As a rule the tried man is the praying man; the angel must wrestle with us in the night before we learn to hold him, and cry, "I will not let thee go."

O daughter of sorrow, if in thy darkened chamber thou shalt learn the art of prevailing with the Well-beloved, yon bright-eyed maidens, adown whose cheeks no tears have ever rushed, may well envy you, for to be proficient in the art and mystery of prayer is to be as a prince with God. May God grant that if we are of a sorrowful spirit, we may in the same proportion be of a prayerful spirit; and we need scarcely desire a change.

In the next place, Hannah *had learned self-denial.* This is clear, since the very prayer by which she hoped to escape out of her great grief was a self-denying one. She desired a son, that her reproach might be removed; but if her eyes might be blessed with such a sight she would cheerfully resign her darling to be the Lord's as long as he lived. Mothers wish to keep their children about them. It is natural that they should wish to see them often. But Hannah, when most eager for a man-child, asking but for one, and that one as the special gift of God, yet does not seek him for herself, but for her God. She has it on her heart that, as soon as she has weaned him, she will take him up to the house of God and leave him there, as a dedicated child whom she can only see at certain festivals. Read her own words: "O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." Her heart longs not to see her boy at home, his father's daily pride, and her own hourly solace, but to see him serving as a Levite in the house of the Lord. She thus proved that she had learned self-denial. Brethren and sisters, this is one of our hardest lessons: to learn to give up what we most prize at the command of God, and to do so cheerfully. This is real self-denial, when we ourselves make the proposition, and offer the sacrifice freely, as she did. To desire a blessing that we may have the opportunity of parting with it, this is self-conquest: have we reached it? O thou of a sorrowful spirit, if thou hast learned to crucify the flesh, if thou hast learned to keep under the body, if thou hast learned to cast

all thy desires and wills at his feet, thou hast gained what a thousand times repays thee for all the losses and crosses thou hast suffered. Personally, I bless God for joy, I think I could sometimes do with a little more of it; but I fear, when I take stock of my whole life, that I have very seldom made any real growth in grace except as the result of being digged about and dunged by the stern husbandry of pain. My leaf is greenest in showery weather: my fruit is sweetest when it has been frosted by a winter's night. Woe's me that I should have to make so humbling a confession of my own foolishness, but truth compels me thus to stand among those who ought to be ashamed. I hope that many of you are much more gracious than I am, and have made much better use of your mercies, and yet I fear that many of my brethren must confess that they have made more headway in spiritual sailing amid the raging of the sea than in more halcyon times. A stiff breeze brings certain of us far more help than danger, and even a tempest is not without its benediction. If we have self-denial wrought in us, however costly the process, the result abundantly repays us.

Another precious thing had come to this woman, and that was, *she had learned faith*. She had become proficient in believing promises. It is very beautiful to note how at one moment she was in bitterness, but as soon as Eli had said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him," "the woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." She had not yet obtained the blessing, but she was persuaded of the promise, and embraced it, after that Christly fashion which our Lord taught us when he said, "Believe that ye have the petitions which ye have asked, and ye shall have them," she wiped her tears, and smoothed the wrinkles from her brow, knowing that she was heard. By faith she held a man-child in her arms, and presented it to the Lord. This is no small virtue to attain. When a sorrowful spirit has learned to believe God, to roll its burden upon him, and bravely to expect succour and help from him, it has learned by its losses how to make its best gains—by its griefs how to unfold its richest joys. Hannah is one of the honoured band who through faith "received promises," therefore, O you who are of a sorrowful spirit, there is no reason why you should not also be of a believing spirit, even as she was.

Still more of preciousness this woman of a sorrowful spirit found growing out of her sorrow, but with one invaluable item I shall close the list: she had evidently *learned much of God*. Driven from common family joys she had been drawn near to God, and in that heavenly fellowship she had remained a humble waiter and watcher. In seasons of sacred nearness to the Lord she had made many heavenly discoveries of his name and nature, as her song makes us perceive.

First, she now knew that the heart's truest joy is not in children, nor even in mercies given in answer to prayer, for she began to sing, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord"—not "in Samuel," but in Jehovah her chief delight was found. "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord"—not "in that little one whom I have so gladly brought up to the sanctuary." No. She says in the first verse, "I rejoice in thy salvation," and it was even so. God was her exceeding joy, and his salvation her delight. Oh! it is a great thing to be taught to put earthly things in their proper

places, and when they make you glad yet to feel, "My gladness is in God; not in corn and wine and oil, but in the Lord himself; all my fresh springs are in him."

Next, she had also discovered the Lord's glorious *holiness*, for she sang, "There is none holy as the Lord." The wholeness of his perfect character charmed and impressed her, and she sang of him as far above all others in his goodness.

She had perceived his *all sufficiency*, she saw that he is all in all, for she sang, "There is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God."

She had found out *God's method in providence*, for how sweetly she sings, "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength." She knew that this was always God's way—to overturn those who are strong in self, and to set up those who are weak. It is God's way to cut down and wither the high and green trees, and to cause the low and withered trees to flourish. It is God's way to smite the strong with weakness, and to bless the weak with strength. As her great successor sang at a later day, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." It is God's peculiar way, and he abides by it. The full he empties, and the empty he fills. Those who boast of their power to live he slays; and those who faint before him as dead, he makes alive. Friend, do you know anything of this; for, mark you, this is a secret which the saints know by personal experience?

She had also been taught *the way and method of his grace* as well as of his providence, for never did a woman show more acquaintance with the wonders of divine grace than she did when she sang, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." This, too, is another of those ways of the Lord which are only understood by his people. None but they will ever sing of this singular sovereignty of grace: as for the worldlings, they utterly abhor the doctrine.

She had also seen the *Lord's faithfulness* to his people. Some Christians, even in these gospel days, do not believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, but she did. She sang, "He will keep the feet of his saints"; and, beloved, so he will, or none of them will ever stand.

> "If ever it could come to pass,
> That sheep of Christ should fall away,
> My fickle, feeble, soul, alas!
> Would fall a thousand times a day."

But here is my comfort, and yours also, "He will keep the feet of his saints."

She had foreseen also somewhat of *his kingdom*, and of the glory of it. Her prophetic eye, made brighter and clearer by her holy tears, enabled her to look into the future, and looking, her joyful heart made her sing, "He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his Anointed."

Have I not sufficiently shown you that many precious things come out of a sorrowful spirit?

III. And now, lastly, MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS WILL YET BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE TRULY THE LORD'S, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE A SORROWFUL SPIRIT.

For, first, Hannah had *her prayers answered.* Ah! little could she have imagined when Eli was rebuking her for drunkenness, that within a short time she should be there, and the same priest should look at her with deep respect and delight because the Lord had favoured her. And you, my dear friend of a sorrowful spirit, would not weep so much to-night if you knew what is in store for you. You would not weep at all if you guessed how soon all will change, and like Sarah, you will laugh for very joy. You are very poor; you scarcely know where you will place your head to-night; but if you knew in how short a time you will be amongst the angels, your penury would not cause you much distress. You are sickening and pining away, and will soon go to your long home. You would not be so depressed if you remembered how bright around your head will shine the starry diadem, and how sweetly your tongue shall pour forth heavenly sonnets such as none can sing but those who, like you, have tasted of the bitter waters of grief. It is better on before! It is better on before! A short way ahead the road will end or mend! To-day's sailing is boisterous; but ere the sun goes down, or, at least, *when* he goes down, all will be quiet, and your barque will be motionless from stem to stern. The Red Sea before you rolls uneasily, its billows threatening, but all will be as still as a stone while the Lord's people pass over; or if a sound be heard, it will only be that over the waters come the strains of harpers harping with their harps, and soon you shall forget your pains and fears, for you shall be for ever with the Lord. Let these things cheer you if you are of a sorrowful spirit. There shall be a fulfilment of the things which God has promised to you. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things he hath laid up for you, but his Spirit reveals them to you at this hour. Be of good courage, and believe that the issues of life and death are fixed and sure; eternal love has ordained them.

Not only did there come to Hannah after her sorrow an answered prayer, but *grace to use that answer.* I do not think that Hannah would have been a fit mother for Samuel if she had not first of all been of a sorrowful spirit. It is not everybody that can be trusted to educate a young prophet. Many a fool of a woman has made a fool of her child. He was so much her "duck" that he grew up to be a goose. It needs a wise woman to train up a wise son, and therefore I regard Samuel's eminent character and career as largely the fruit of his mother's sorrow, and as a reward for her griefs. Hannah was a thoughtful mother, which was something, and her thought induced diligence. She had slender space in which to educate her boy, for he left her early to wear the little coat, and minister before the Lord; but in that space her work was effectually done, for the child Samuel worshipped the very day she took him up to the temple. In many of our homes we have a well-drawn picture of a child at prayer, and such I doubt not was the very image of the youthful Samuel. I like to think of him with that little coat on—that linen ephod—coming forth in solemn style, as a child-servant of

God, to help in the services of the temple. I think I see the little man with his long hair all streaming down his shoulders, for by his mother's vow no razor could come upon his head; see him yourselves, and mark how he rebukes the Roman shavelings. He did not belong to that modern priesthood which, by shaving its head, implies its own fever or madness, but denies its own claim to belong to God. Let the priests of Rome shave on, and so cut themselves off from the true temple. I say it is pleasant to see how, even in the matter of his hair, his mother had trained him up in the way, so that he never departed from it: this was a great gift, and it was vouchsafed to a woman of a sorrowful spirit.

Hannah had acquired another blessing, and that was the *power to magnify the Lord.* Those sweet songs of hers, especially that precious one which we have been reading—where did she get it from? I will tell you. You have picked up a shell, have you not, by the sea side, and you have put it to your ear, and heard it sing of the wild waves? Where did it learn this music? In the deeps. It had been tossed to and fro in the rough sea until it learned to talk with a deep, soft meaning of mysterious things, which only the salt sea caves can communicate. Hannah's poesy was born of her sorrow; and if everyone here that is of a sorrowful spirit can but learn to tune his harp as sweetly as she tuned hers, he may be right glad to have passed through such griefs as she endured. We may be poets and psalmists yet in our own humble way. Trials will teach us tune and time, stanzas and verses will flow like wine from the trodden grapes, and poems grow in the furrows of our adversities. Or, if not, yet shall the Lord be praised, and his love extolled in the best terms our speech can come at; and this is worth a world of suffering.

Moreover, her sorrow *prepared her to receive further blessings*, for after the birth of Samuel she had three more sons and two daughters, God thus giving her five for the one that she had dedicated to him. This was grand interest for her loan: five hundred per cent. Parting with Samuel was the necessary preface to the reception of other little ones. God cannot bless some of us till first of all he has tried us. Many of us are not fit to receive a great blessing till we have gone through the fire. Half the men that have been ruined by popularity have been so ruined because they did not undergo a preparatory course of opprobrium and shame. Half the men who perish by riches do so because they had not toiled to earn them, but made a lucky hit, and became wealthy in an hour. Passing through the fire anneals the weapon which afterwards is to be used in the conflict; and Hannah gained grace to be greatly favoured by being greatly sorrowing. Her name stands amongst the highly-favoured women because she was deeply sorrowing. She shines a bright, particular star amongst the faithful, and this had not been if she had not been first a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Take up your load, my beloved. Do not become murmurers as well as mourners. Carry your cross, for it is in very truth a golden one. Carry the inward as well as the outward burden, for now for a season there is a "needs be" that ye be in heaviness through manifold temptations, but afterwards comes the comfortable fruit. Look for fair results, and meanwhile bear what the Lord appoints you without repining.

Last of all, it was by suffering in patience that she became so brave a

witness for the Lord, and could so sweetly sing, "There is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any rock like our God." We cannot bear testimony unless we test the promise, and therefore happy is the man whom the Lord tests and qualifies to leave a testimony to the world that God is true. To that witness I would set my own personal seal. O that it might be mine to do so at the close of life in humble prose, as that sweet poetess Miss Havergal did in richest poesy ere she entered her eternal rest. Here are some of her last lines, and with them I close:—

"Master, I set my seal that thou art true;
Of thy good promise not one thing hath failed!
And I would send a ringing challenge forth,
To all who know thy name, to tell it out,
Thy faithfulness to every written word,
Thy lovingkindness crowning all the days—
To say and sing with me: 'The Lord is good,
His mercy is for ever, and his truth
Is written on each page of all my life'!
Yes, there *is* tribulation, but thy power
Can blend it with rejoicing. There *are* thorns,
But they have kept us in the narrow way,
The King's highway of holiness and peace.
And there *is* chastening, but the Father's love
Flows through it; and would any trusting heart
Forego the chastening and forego the love?
And every step leads on to 'more and more,'
From strength to strength thy pilgrims pass, and sing
The praise of him who leads them on and on,
From glory unto glory, even here!"

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel i. 1—3, 9—28; ii. 1—11, 18, 19.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—731, 708, 699.

One Penny Each. In neat Wrapper.

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Specially adapted for gratuitous distribution.

TOKEN FOR THE BEREAVED.
LET US PRAY.
CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.
SERMON FOR EVERYBODY.
HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH.
IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?
THE TURNING POINT.
A SPUR FOR A FREE HORSE.
BELLS FOR THE HORSES.
THE WAR HORSE.
GOD'S JEWELS.
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.
CONFESSION OF SIN.
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION.
THE WAY OF SALVATION.
INFANT SALVATION.
HOW TO RAISE THE DEAD.
NONE BUT JESUS.
THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY.
THE SILVER TRUMPET.
JESUS AND THE LAMBS.
A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.
THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH.
BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS.
LOVING ADVICE for ANXIOUS SEEKERS.
THE UPPER HAND.
A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.
LANDLORD AND TENANT
A DOUBLE KNOCK AT THE DOOR OF THE YOUNG.
THERE GO THE SHIPS.
LITTLE DOGS.
THE SILLY DOVE.
THE HOLD FAST.
RECEIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD.
AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY FOR A BELOVED SON.
NUMBER 1868, OR LIFTING UP THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION BY KNOWING THE TRUTH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—1 Timothy ii. 3, 4.

MAY God the Holy Ghost guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved and saints stirred up to diligence.

I do not intend to treat my text controversially. It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building, and it looks towards a different side of the gospel from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of truth meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together; and theology has such corners. It would be very easy indeed to set ourselves in battle array, and during the next half-hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it, and, as we have very little time to spare, and life is short, we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit, and help us really to profit by his word.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that he wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose, for, if he did, then all men would be saved. He willed to make the world, and the world was made: he does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved. Terrible as the truth is, yet is it certain from holy writ that there are men who, in consequence of their sin and their rejection of the Saviour, will go away into everlasting punishment, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There will at the last be goats upon the left hand as well as sheep on the right, tares to be burned as well as wheat to be garnered, chaff to be blown away as well as corn to be preserved. There will be a dreadful hell as well as a glorious heaven, and there is no decree to the contrary.

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I trow not. You must, most of you, be

acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends deal with this text. "All men," say they,—"that is, *some men*": as if the Holy Ghost could not have said "some men" if he had meant some men. "All men," say they; "that is, some of all sorts of men": as if the Lord could not have said "all sorts of men" if he had meant that. The Holy Ghost by the apostle has written "all men," and unquestionably he means all men. I know how to get rid of the force of the "alls" according to that critical method which some time ago was very current, but I do not see how it can be applied here with due regard to truth. I was reading just now the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away; he applies grammatical gunpowder to it, and explodes it by way of expounding it. I thought when I read his exposition that it would have been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, "Who *will not* have all men to be saved, nor come to a knowledge of the truth." Had such been the inspired language every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, "Who *will* have all men to be saved," his observations are more than a little out of place. My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the word of God. I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself, for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent? But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the word of God that I should want to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any divine expression. So runs the text, and so we must read it, "God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Does not the text mean that it is the wish of God that men should be saved? The word "wish" gives as much force to the original as it really requires, and the passage should run thus—"whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." As it is *my* wish that it should be so, as it is *your* wish that it might be so, so it is God's wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are. Then comes the question, "But if he wishes it to be so, why does he not make it so?" Beloved friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer, and, if that be so, I am sure a wise person, like yourself, can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer. Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages,—"If God be infinitely good and powerful, why does not his power carry out to the full all his beneficence?" It is God's wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God's wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God's wish that his creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy,

and yet it would be wicked to suppose that he does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that he has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by his infinite omnipotence; and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell. I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties, and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the negro who said, "Sare, you say the devil makes sin in the world." "Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin." "And you say that God hates sin." "Yes." "Then why does not he kill the devil and put an end to it?" Just so. Why does he not? Ah, my black friend, you will grow white before that question is answered. I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil, neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in heaven.

This is one of those things which we do not need to know. Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once. In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith, and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. You will soon have I know not what of doubt and difficulty and bitterness upon your soul if you must needs know the unknowable, and have reasons and explanations for the sublime and the mysterious. Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul, by a grand exercise of confidence in God.

I thank God for a thousand things I cannot understand. When I cannot get to know the reason why, I say to myself, "Why should I know the reason why? Who am I, and what am I, that I should demand explanations of my God?" I am a most unreasonable being when I am most reasonable, and when my judgment is most accurate I dare not trust it. I had rather trust my God. I am a poor silly child at my very best: my Father must know better than I. An old parable-maker tells us that he shut himself up in his study because he had to work out a difficult problem. His little child came knocking at the door, and he said "Go away, John: you cannot understand what father is doing; let father alone." Master Johnny for that very reason felt that he must get in and see what father was doing —a true symbol of our proud intellects; we must pry into forbidden things, and uncover that which is concealed. In a little time upon the sill, outside the window, stood Master Johnny, looking in through the window at his father; and if his father had not with the very tenderest care just taken him away from that very dangerous position, there would have been no Master Johnny left on the face of the earth to exercise his curiosity in dangerous elevations. Now, God sometimes shuts the door, and says, "My child, it is so: be content to believe." "But," we foolishly cry, "Lord, why is it so?" "It is so, my child," he says. "But why, Father, is it so?" "It is so, my child, believe me." Then we go speculating, climbing the ladders of reasoning, guessing, speculating, to reach the lofty windows of eternal truth. Once up there we do not know where we are, our heads reel, and we are in all kinds of uncertainty and spiritual peril. If we mind things too high for us we

shall run great risks. I do not intend meddling with such lofty matters. There stands the text, and I believe that it is my Father's wish that "all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." But I know, also, that he does not will it, so that he will save any one of them, unless they believe in his dear Son; for he has told us over and over that he will not. He will not save any man except he forsakes his sins, and turns to him with full purpose of heart: that I also know. And I know, also, that he has a people whom he will save, whom by his eternal love he has chosen, and whom by his eternal power he will deliver. I do not know how that squares with this; that is another of the things I do not know. If I go on telling you of all that I do not know, and of all that I do know, I will warrant you that the things that I do not know will be a hundred to one of the things that I do know. And so we will say no more about the matter, but just go on to the more practical part of the text. God's wish about man's salvation is this,—that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Men are saved, and the same men that are saved come to a knowledge of the truth. The two things happen together, and the two facts very much depend upon each other. God's way of saving men is not by leaving them in ignorance. It is by *a knowledge of the truth that men are saved;* this will make the main body of our discourse, and in closing we shall see how this truth *gives instruction to those who wish to be saved,* and also *to those who desire to save others.* May the Holy Spirit make these closing inferences to be practically useful.

Here is our proposition: IT IS BY A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH THAT MEN ARE SAVED.

Observe that stress is laid upon the article: it is *the* truth, and not every truth. Though it is a good thing to know the truth about anything, and we ought not to be satisfied to take up with a falsehood upon any point, yet it is not every truth that will save us. We are not saved by knowing any one theological truth we may choose to think of, for there are some theological truths which are comparatively of inferior value. They are not vital or essential, and a man may know them, and yet may not be saved. It is *the* truth which saves. Jesus Christ is *the* truth: the whole testimony of God about Christ is *the* truth. The work of the Holy Ghost in the heart is to work in us *the* truth. The knowledge of the truth is a large knowledge. It is not always so at the first: it may begin with but a little knowledge, but it is a large knowledge when it is further developed, and the soul is fully instructed in the whole range of the truth.

This knowledge of the grand facts which are here called the truth saves men, and we will notice its mode of operation. Very often it begins its work in a man by arousing him, and thus it *saves him from carelessness.* He did not know anything about the truth which God has revealed, and so he lived like a brute beast. If he had enough to eat and to drink he was satisfied. If he laid by a little money he was delighted. So long as the days passed pretty merrily, and he was free from aches and pains, he was satisfied. He heard about religion, but he thought it did not concern him. He supposed that there were some people who might be the better for thinking about it, but as far as he was

concerned, he thought no more about God or godliness than the ox of the stall or the ostrich of the desert. Well, the truth came to him, and he received a knowledge of it. He knew only a part, and that a very dark and gloomy part of it, but it stirred him out of his carelessness, for he suddenly discovered that he was under the wrath of God. Perhaps he heard a sermon, or read a tract, or had a practical word addressed to him by some Christian friend, and he found out enough to know that "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." That startled him. "God is angry with the wicked every day:"—that amazed him. He had not thought of it, perhaps had not known it, but when he did know it, he could rest no longer. Then he came to a knowledge of this further truth, that after death there would be a judgment, that he would rise again, and that, being risen, he would have to stand before the judgment-seat of God to give an account of the things which he had done in the body. This came home very strikingly to him. Perhaps, also, such a text as this flamed forth before him,—"For every idle word that man shall speak he must give an account in the day of judgment." His mind began to foresee that last tremendous day, when on the clouds of heaven Christ will come and summon quick and dead, to answer at his judgment-seat for the whole of their lives. He did not know that before, but, knowing it, it startled and aroused him. I have known men, when first they have come to a knowledge of this truth, become unable to sleep. They have started up in the night. They have asked those who were with them to help them to pray. The next day they have been scarcely able to mind their business, for a dreadful sound has been in their ears. They feared lest they should stumble into the grave and into hell. Thus they were saved from carelessness. They could not go back to be the mere brute beasts they were before. Their eyes had been opened to futurity and eternity. Their spirits had been quickened—at least so much that they could not rest in that doltish, dull, dead carelessness in which they had formerly been found. They were shaken out of their deadly lethargy by a knowledge of the truth.

The truth is useful to a man in another way: *it saves him from prejudice.* Often when men are awakened to know something about the wrath of God they begin to plunge about to discover divers methods by which they may escape from that wrath. Consulting, first of all, with themselves, they think that, if they can reform—give up their grosser sins, and if they can join with religious people, they will make it all right. And there are some who go and listen to a kind of religious teacher, who says, "You must do good works. You must earn a good character. You must add to all this the ceremonies of our church. You must be particular and precise in receiving blessing only through the appointed channel of the apostolical succession." Of the aforesaid mystical succession this teacher has the effrontery to assure his dupe that he is a legitimate instrument; and that sacraments received at his hands are means of grace. Under such untruthful notions we have known people who were somewhat aroused sit down again in a false peace. They have done all that they judged right and attended to all that they were told. Suddenly, by God's grace, they come to a knowledge of another truth, and that is that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified

in the sight of God. They discover that salvation is not by works of the law or by ceremonies, and that if any man be under the law he is also under the curse. Such a text as the following comes home, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"; and such another text as this, "Ye must be born again," and then this at the back of it—"that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When they also find out that there is necessary a righteousness better than their own —a perfect righteousness to justify them before God, and when they discover that they must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else they must utterly perish, then they are saved from false confidences, saved from crying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. It is a grand thing when a knowledge of the truth stops us from trusting in a lie. I am addressing some who remember when they were saved in that way. What an opening of the eyes it was to you! You had a great prejudice against the gospel of grace and the plan of salvation by faith; but when the Lord took you in hand and made you see your beautiful righteousness to be a moth-eaten mass of rags, and when the gold that you had accumulated suddenly turned into so much brass, cankered, and good for nothing,—when you stood stripped naked before God, and the poor cobwebs of ceremonies suddenly dropped from off you, oh, then the Lord was working his salvation in your soul, and you were being saved from false confidences by a knowledge of the truth.

Moreover, it often happens that a knowledge of the truth stands a man in good stead for another purpose; *it saves him from despair.* Unable to be careless, and unable to find comfort in false confidences, some poor agitated minds are driven into a wide and stormy sea without rudder or compass, with nothing but wreck before them. "There is no hope for me," says the man. "I perceive I cannot save myself. I see that I am lost. I am dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot stir hand or foot. Surely now I may as well go on in sin, and even multiply my transgressions. The gate of mercy is shut against me; what is the use of fear where there is no room for hope?" At such a time, if the Lord leads the man to a knowledge of the truth, he perceives that though his sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as white as snow. That precious doctrine of substitution comes in—that Christ stood in the stead of the sinner, that the transgression of his people was laid upon him, and that God, by thus avenging sin in the person of his dear Son, and honouring his law by the suffering of the Saviour, is now able to declare pardon to the penitent and grace to the believing. Now, when the soul comes to know that sin is put away by the atoning blood; when the heart discovers that it is not our life that saves us, but the life of God that comes to dwell in us; that we are not to be regenerated by our own actions, but are regenerated by the Holy Ghost who comes to us through the precious death of Jesus, then despair flies away, and the soul cries exultingly, "There is hope. There is hope. Christ died for sinners: why should I not have a part in that precious death? He came like a physician to heal the sick: why should he not heal me? Now I perceive that he does not want my goodness, but my badness; he does not need

my righteousness, but my unrighteousness: for he came to save the ungodly and to redeem his people from their sins." I say, when the heart comes to a knowledge of this truth, then it is saved from despair; and this is no small part of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

A saving knowledge of the truth, to take another line of things, works in this way. A knowledge of the truth *shows a man his personal need of being saved.* O you that are not saved, and who dream you do not need to be, you only require to know the truth, and you will perceive that you must be saved or lost for ever.

A knowledge of the truth *reveals the atonement by which we are saved:* a knowledge of the truth *shows us what that faith is by which the atonement becomes available for us:* a knowledge of the truth teaches us that faith is the simple act of trusting, that it is not an action of which man may boast; it is not an action of the nature of a work, so as to be a fruit of the law; but faith is a self-denying grace which finds all its strength in him upon whom it lives, and lays all its honour upon him. Faith is not self in action but self forsaken, self abhorred, self put away that the soul may trust in Christ, and trust in Christ alone. There are persons now present who are puzzled about what faith is. We have tried to explain it a great many times to you, but we have explained it so that you did not understand it any the better; and yet the same explanation has savingly instructed others. May God the Holy Ghost open your understandings that you may practically know what faith is, and at once exercise it. I suppose that it is a very hard thing to understand because it is so plain. When a man wishes the way of salvation to be difficult he naturally kicks at it because it is easy; and, when his pride wants it to be hard to be understood, he is pretty sure to say that he does not understand it because it is so plain. Do not you know that the unlettered often receive Christ when philosophers refuse him, and that he who has not called many of the great, and many of the mighty, has chosen poor, foolish, and despised things? That is because poor foolish men, you know, are willing to believe a plain thing, but men wise in their own conceits desire to be, if they can, a little confounded and puzzled that they may please themselves with the idea that their own superior intellect has made a discovery; and, because the way of salvation is just so easy that almost an idiot boy may lay hold of it, therefore they pretend that they do not understand it. Some people cannot see a thing because it is too high up; but there are others who cannot see it because it is too low down. Now, it so happens that the way of salvation by faith is so simple that it seems beneath the dignity of exceedingly clever men. May God bring them to a knowledge of this truth: may they see that they cannot be saved except by giving up all idea of saving themselves; that they cannot be saved except they step right into Christ, for, until they get to the end of the creature, they will never get to the beginning of the Creator. Till they empty out their pockets of every mouldy crust, and have not a crumb left; they cannot come and take the rich mercy which is stored up in Christ Jesus for every empty, needy sinner. May the Lord be pleased to give you that knowledge of the truth!

When a man comes in very deed to a knowledge of the truth about

faith in Christ, he trusts Christ, and he is there and then saved from the guilt of sin; and he begins to be saved altogether from sin. God cuts the root of the power of sin that very day; but yet it has such life within itself that at the scent of water it will bud again. Sin in our members struggles to live. It has as many lives as a cat: there is no killing it. Now, when we come to a knowledge of the truth, we begin to learn how sin is to be killed in us—how the same Christ that justifies, sanctifies, and works in us according to his working who worketh in us mightily, that we may be conformed to the image of Christ, and made meet to dwell with perfect saints above. Beloved, many of you that are saved from the guilt of sin, have a very hard struggle with the power of sin, and have much more conflict, perhaps, than you need to have, because you have not come to a knowledge of all the truth about indwelling sin. I therefore beg you to study much the word of God upon that point, and especially to see the adaptation of Christ to rule over your nature, and to conquer all your corrupt desires, and learn how by faith to bring each sin before him that, like Agag, it may be hewed in pieces before his eyes. You will never overcome sin except by the blood of the Lamb. There is no sanctification except by faith. The same instrument which destroys sin as to its guilt must slay sin as to its power. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb," and so must you. Learn this truth well, so shall you find salvation wrought in you from day to day.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, "I think I know all about this." Yes, you may think you know it, and may not know anything at all about it. "Oh, but," says one, "I do know it. I learned the 'Assembly's Catechism' when I was a child. I have read the Bible ever since, and I am well acquainted with all the commonplaces of orthodoxy." That may be, dear friend, and yet you may not know the truth. I have heard of a man who knew how to swim, but, as he had never been in the water, I do not think much of his knowledge of swimming: in fact, he did not really know the art. I have heard of a botanist who understood all about flowers, but as he lived in London, and scarcely ever saw above one poor withered thing in a flower-pot, I do not think much of his botany. I have heard of a man who was a very great astronomer, but he had not a telescope, and I never thought much of his astronomy. So there are many persons who think they know and yet do not know because they have never had any personal acquaintance with the thing. A mere notional knowledge or a dry doctrinal knowledge is of no avail. We must know the truth in a very different way from that.

How are we to know it, then? Well, we are to know it, first, by *a believing knowledge*. You do not know a thing unless you believe it to be really so. If you doubt it, you do not know it. If you say, "I really am not sure it is true," then you cannot say that you know it. That which the Lord has revealed in holy Scripture you must devoutly believe to be true. In addition to this, your knowledge, if it becomes believing knowledge, must be *personal knowledge*—a persuasion that it is true in reference to yourself. It is true about your neighbour, about your brother, but you must believe it about *yourself*, or your knowledge is vain—for instance, you must know that *you* are lost—that *you* are in

danger of eternal destruction from the presence of God—that for *you* there is no hope but in Christ—that for *you* there is hope if you rest in Christ—that resting in Christ *you* are saved. Yes, *you*. You must know that because you have trusted in Christ *you* are saved, and that now *you* are free from condemnation, and that now in *you* the new life has begun, which will fight against the old life of sin, until it overcome, and you, even you, are safely landed on the golden shore. There must be a personal appropriation of what you believe to be true. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul.

But this must be *a powerful knowledge*, by which I mean that it must operate in and upon your mind. A man is told that his house is on fire. I will suppose that standing here I held up a *telegram*, and said, "My friend, is your name so-and-so?" "Yes." "Well, your house is on fire." He knows the fact, does he not? Yes, but he sits quite still. Now, my impression is about that good brother, that he does not know, for he does not believe it. He cannot believe it, surely: he may believe that somebody's house is on fire, but not his own. If it is his house which is burning, and he knows it, what does he do? Why he gets up and goes off to see what he can do towards saving his goods. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul—when a man knows the truth about himself, and therefore his whole nature is moved and affected by the knowledge. Do I know that I am in danger of hell fire? And am I in my senses? Then I shall never rest till I have escaped from that danger. Do I know that there is salvation for me in Christ? Then I never shall be content until I have obtained that salvation by the faith to which that salvation is promised: that is to say, if I really am in my senses, and if my sin has not made me beside myself as sin does, for sin works a moral madness upon the mind of man, so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and dances on the jaws of hell, and sits down and scoffs at Almighty mercy, despises the precious blood of Christ and will have none of it, although there and there only is his salvation to be found.

This knowledge when it comes really to save the soul is what we call *experimental knowledge*—knowledge acquired according to the exhortation of the psalmist, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good"—acquired by tasting. Now, at this present moment, I, speaking for myself, know that I am originally lost by nature. Do I believe it? Believe it? I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence. I know that I am lost by nature. It would not be possible for anybody to make me doubt that: I have felt it. How many weary days I spent under the pressure of that knowledge! Does a soldier know that there is such a thing as a cat when he has had a hundred lashes? It would take a deal of argument to make him believe there is not such a thing, or that backs do not smart when they feel the lash. Oh, how my soul smarted under the lash of conscience when I suffered under a sense of sin! Do I know that I could not save myself? Know it? Why, my poor, struggling heart laboured this way and that, even as in the very fire with bitter disappointment, for I laboured to climb to the stars on a treadwheel, and I was trying and trying and trying with all my might, but never rose an inch higher. I tried to fill a bottomless tub with leaking buckets, and worked on and toiled and slaved, but never

accomplished even the beginning of my unhappy task. I know, for I have tried it, that salvation is not in man, or in all the feelings, and weepings, and prayings, and Bible readings, and church goings, and chapel goings which zeal could crowd together. Nothing whatsoever that man does can avail him towards his own salvation. This I know by sad trial of it, and failure in it.

But I do know that there is real salvation by believing in Christ. Know it? I have never preached to you concerning that subject what I do not know by experience. In a moment, when I believed in Christ I leaped from despair to fulness of delight. Since I have believed in Jesus I have found myself totally new—changed altogether from what I was; and I find now that, in proportion as I trust in Jesus, I love God and try to serve him; but if at any time I begin to trust in myself, I forget my God, and I become selfish and sinful. Just as I keep on being nothing and taking Christ to be everything, so am I led in the paths of righteousness. I am merely talking of myself, because a man cannot bear witness about other people so thoroughly as he can about himself. I am sure that all of you who have tried my Master can bear the same witness. You have been saved, and you have come to a knowledge of the truth experimentally; and every soul here that would be saved must in the same way believe the truth, appropriate the truth, act upon the truth, and experimentally know the truth, which is summed up in few words:—"Man lost: Christ his Saviour. Man nothing: God all in all. The heart depraved: the Spirit working the new life by faith." The Lord grant that these truths may come home to your hearts with power.

I am now going to draw two inferences which are to be practical. The first one is this: in regard TO YOU THAT ARE SEEKING SALVATION. Does not the text show you that it is very possible that the reason why you have not found salvation is because you do not know the truth? Hence, I do most earnestly entreat the many of you young people who cannot get rest to be very diligent searchers of your Bibles. The first thing and the main thing is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you say, "I do not understand it," or "I cannot believe," or if there be any such doubt rising in your mind, then it may be because you have not gained complete knowledge of the truth. It is very possible that somebody will say to you, "Believe, believe, believe." I would say the same to you, but I should like you to act upon the common-sense principle of knowing what is to be believed and in whom you are to believe. I explained this to one who came to me a few evenings ago. She said that she could not believe. "Well," I said, "now suppose as you sit in that chair I say to you, 'Young friend, I cannot believe in you': you would say to me, 'I think you should.' Suppose I then replied, 'I wish I could.' What would you bid me do? Should I sit still and look at you till I said, 'I think I can believe in you'? That would be ridiculous. No, I should go and enquire, 'Who is this young person? What kind of character does she bear? What are her connections?' and when I knew all about you, then I have no doubt that I should say, 'I have made examination into this young woman's character, and I cannot help believing in her.'" Now, it is just so with Jesus Christ. If you say, "I cannot believe in him,"

read those four blessed testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and especially linger much over those parts where they tell you of his death. Do you know that many, while they have been sitting, as it were, at the foot of the cross, viewing the Son of God dying for men, have cried out, "I cannot help believing. I cannot help believing. When I see my sin, it seems too great; but when I see my Saviour my iniquity vanishes away." I think I have put it to you sometimes like this: if you take a ride through London, from end to end, it will take you many days to get an idea of its vastness; for probably none of us know the size of London. After your long ride of inspection you will say, "I wonder how those people can all be fed. I cannot make it out. Where does all the bread come from, and all the butter, and all the cheese, and all the meat, and everything else? Why, these people will be starved. It is not possible that Lebanon with all its beasts, and the vast plains of Europe and America should ever supply food sufficient for all this multitude." That is your feeling. And then, to-morrow morning you get up, and you go to Covent Garden, you go to the great meat-markets, and to other sources of supply, and when you come home you say, "I feel quite different now, for now I cannot make out where all the people come from to eat all this provision: I never saw such store of food in all my life. Why, if there were two Londons, surely there is enough here to feed them." Just so—when you think about your sins and your wants you get saying, "How can I be saved?" Now, turn your thoughts the other way; think that Christ is the Son of God: think of what the merit must be of the incarnate God's bearing human guilt; and instead of saying, "My sin is too great," you will almost think the atoning sacrifice too great. Therefore I do urge you to try and know more of Christ; and I am only giving you the advice of Isaiah, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Know, hear, read, and believe more about these precious things, always with this wish—"I am not hearing for hearing's sake, and I am not wishing to know for knowing's sake, but I am wanting to hear and to know that I may be saved." I want you to be like the woman that lost her piece of silver. She did not light a candle and then say, "Bravo, I have lit a candle, this is enough." She did not take her broom and then sit down content, crying, "What a splendid broom." When she raised a dust she did not exclaim, "What a dust I am making! I am surely making progress now." Some poor sinners, when they have been seeking, get into a dust of soul-trouble, and think it to be a comfortable sign. No, I'll warrant you, the woman wanted her groat: she did not mind the broom, or the dust, or the candle; she looked for the silver. So it must be with you. Never content yourself with the reading, the hearing, or the feeling. It is Christ you want. It is the precious piece of money that you must find; and you must sweep until you find it. Why, there it is! There is Jesus! Take him! Take him! Believe him now, even now, and you are saved.

The last inference is for YOU WHO DESIRE TO SAVE SINNERS. You must, dear friends, bring *the truth* before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost anything is to be

tolerated that wakes them up; but for real solid soul-work before God, telling men the truth is the main thing. What truth? It is gospel truth, truth about Christ that they want. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate manner, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the truth. He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the truth before them. That is God's way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, "Let me call your attention to this passage." It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book itself. Say, "Did you notice this promise, my dear friend? And have you seen that passage?" Have the Scriptures handy. There is a dear brother of mine here whom God blesses to many souls, and I have seen him talking to some, and turning to the texts very handily. I wondered how he did it so quickly, till I looked in his Bible, and found that he had the choice texts printed on two leaves and inserted into the book, so that he could always open upon them. That is a capital plan, to get the cheering words ready to hand, the very ones that you know have comforted you and have comforted others. It sometimes happens that one single verse of God's word will make the light to break into a soul, when fifty days of reasoning would not do it. I notice that when souls are saved it is by our texts rather than by our sermons. God the Holy Ghost loves to use his own sword. It is God's word, not man's comment on God's word, that God usually blesses. Therefore, stick to the quotation of the Scripture itself, and rely upon *the truth*. If a man could be saved by a lie it would be a lying salvation. Truth alone can work results that are true. Therefore, keep on teaching *the truth*. God help you to proclaim the precious truth about the bleeding, dying, risen, exalted, coming Saviour; and God will bless it.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—551, 546, 556.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Accept again my heartiest salutations. I hope soon to issue sermons preached at home on the previous Sabbaths, for I purpose, if the Lord will, to leave this shelter on February 2, or thereabouts. Six weeks of continuous fine weather have by God's blessing delivered me from my pains, and enabled me to regain a large measure of strength; and the daily good tidings from home has also helped to quiet my mind and revive my spirit. O that I may be the better for this affliction. As after heavy showers the fountains and brooks run with new force and fulness, so may it be with these sermons now that with me "the rain is over and gone." If you, dear readers, are the more refreshed I shall count pain and weakness to be a small cost for so blessed a result.

Yours most heartily,

Mentone, January 16, 1880. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FOR THE CANDID AND THOUGHTFUL.

A Sermon

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

PREACHED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when Jesus saw" ["saw him," so it should be] "that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—Mark xii. 34.

THIS man began with Christ as a foe, and he ended as a friend. It does not quite appear from Mark, but it is plainly stated by Matthew, that the scribe asked a question of the Saviour "tempting him." He was, therefore, an enemy. Put the mildest sense you like on the word "tempt" and it will retain the idea of an unfriendly testing; yet nothing could be more hearty in the end than the verdict with which he commended our Lord's answer, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth." Our Lord Jesus Christ has an almighty power over men's minds; he possesses irresistible charms by which he turns adversaries into advocates. He has a secret key which fits the wards of human hearts, and he can open that which seems to be the most securely closed against him. "Never man spake like this man," for in his voice, even in his humiliation, there were traces of the eternal fiat which of old spake the primeval midnight into noon.

It strikes me that this scribe was half-hearted in the work of tempting our Lord, even at the first. I should imagine him to have been a very superior man amongst his fellows, a man of greater light and discernment than the rest, and of greater ability in statement and discussion. Possibly for this cause his brother scribes selected him, and put him forward to ask the testing questions. Now, it will sometimes happen that a man is thrust forward by others to do what he would never have thought of doing of his own accord, and quite unwillingly he acts as the mouthpiece of a set of people whom he half despises. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a ready reader of human hearts, and he very soon discovers whether what a man does is being done of himself or whether he is acted upon by a power behind. He discerns the difference between the malicious adversary and the less guilty victim of circumstances. These words of mine may be reaching persons who have opposed a religious movement, or fought against a gracious truth, not because they themselves would have done so if they had been left alone, but others

have egged them on and made use of them, and thus they have been drawn or driven into a false position. The people whom they have been accustomed to lead have led them: it is too often the fate of leaders. The circle of which they have been the centre and the head has imprisoned its own apparent master, and made him captive, so that he fights against that which in his heart he half suspects to be right. If even now, he could be set free from his surroundings he would side with the right. Friend, my blessed Master can read your heart, and understand the pressure under which you are acting. I pray that as he reads your inmost soul he may see what of good there remaineth among the evil, and deliver you out of the false and dangerous position into which you have drifted. Jesus can set you right, my friend—can take you away from the entanglements of your surroundings, sever you from those who are making a tool of you, but who are at the same time sinking you down to their own level: can bring you to be his own friend, and lift you up to his own standard, so that you too shall be the champion of everything that is good and true, and shall go forward with him as your Master, bearing his cross, and looking to wear his crown.

Although the scribe in the narrative before us appeared first under the aspect of an antagonist, and tried to tempt our Lord, yet before long the great Teacher had put him into such a mental condition that he said of him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." At this time I shall first notice *the commendation which is here expressed*; and then, in the second place, I shall dwell for a little while upon *the question which is here suggested*—suggested, I think, by no idle curiosity, but very naturally suggested: Did this man, who was so near to the kingdom, actually enter it, or did he not?

I. May the Holy Spirit instruct and impress us while, first, we consider the COMMENDATION EXPRESSED:—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." I am not going to use this text after the usual fashion. It has been made the heading of a catalogue of characters who are supposed to be not far from the kingdom of God. It is a very proper thing to address hopeful persons, and to give descriptions of conditions about which there is much that is cheering, and yet much to create anxiety; but the text itself does not deal with many cases, but with one whom Jesus judged to be not far from the kingdom of God, of whom it gives us such information that we see why he was thus spoken of. It speaks of one particular individual: "*Thou* art not far from the kingdom of God"; and it tells us that Jesus said this because he saw that he answered discreetly. We may infer without fear of mistake that any man who would answer as this man answered is not far from the kingdom of God. Let us read his answer: "Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

With care let us investigate this reply, and see how far it might be our own language. The first point in which our Saviour saw that the scribe was not far from the kingdom of God was this, that *he possessed candour*, and possessed so much of it that he rose superior to party

considerations. He was a scribe, and naturally he took the side of the scribes and pharisees, but still he was not so much a scribe and pharisee that he would follow them against the truth. He kept himself open to conviction, and as soon as the Saviour had given a fitting answer to the question, he did not, as other pharisees would have done, sneer at him, and continue still to pick fresh holes in his coat, but, like a candid man, he said, "Well, master, thou hast answered rightly"; and thus he did, as it were, separate himself from the unjust and bigoted party for whom he had been the temporary spokesman. He did not avow himself to be a disciple of Christ, yet he gave the great Teacher his due, and said of him what he felt bound to say, namely, that he had answered rightly. Now, my brethren, there is always some hope of a man who is candid, and there is more hope still of one who, being placed by circumstances amongst the bigoted and prejudiced, nevertheless breaks away from bondage, keeps a conscience, preserves his eye from total blindness, is willing to see light if light is to be had, and is anxious to know the truth if the truth can be brought before him. It gives me great delight to meet with such persons, even though they confess that they are of a sceptical turn of mind, when it is clear that they are ready to yield to evidence, and are not mere cavillers. Time is wasted upon men who have made up their minds, or who have no minds to make up, but enquirers are worth trouble, and those who will admit right and truth when they see it are among the most hopeful of hearers. We do not wish people to open their mouths and shut their eyes and swallow everything that we may like to give them, yet the mouth ought to be open, or at least willing to be opened, as well as the eye, or our service at the gospel feast will be a weary task. When hearers are willing to receive the truth as well as to examine what they hear, they are in a good state. They will not only "prove all things," which a great many will do, but they are ready also to "hold fast that which is good," which some will not do: among such persons was the scribe.

I will suppose that I am addressing one who has been brought up under a system which makes little of Christ. Perhaps your form of religion makes much of the priest, and of sacraments, but it does not say much of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are faiths which make more of human things than of our divine Saviour, the blessed Redeemer of sinners, and it may be that you profess one of these. Or you may have hitherto lived under a religion which makes much of your good works, and doings, and feelings, and so on. It may be that the Lord will enable you to rise superior to the influence of creeds, of education, and of association, and to say, "I only wish to know God's way of salvation. My desire is to be guided by what the Lord has revealed. I am prepared to accept whatever is plainly taught in the Word of God, even should it reverse all my former beliefs, and deprive me of my most cherished consolations. With sincere heart I ask enlightenment from the divine Spirit." Now, when we meet with a man of that kind, and see him hearing the gospel, we may say of him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." These are the kind of people who feel the force of truth, and are converted to the faith of Jesus, these straightforward people, these hearty lovers of that

which is good. The Saviour called some men, "honest and good ground," and they were such even before the seed of the word fell upon them. Of course, even this natural openness and sincerity of character is God's gift, but assuredly these are the people upon whom the heavenly work takes most effect. Your tricksters, shufflers, players, make-believes and sham-virtuous people, are seldom converted. I speak from wide observation. I have seen scores of blustering blasphemers, who were downright in their profanity, brought to Jesus feet, but I do not remember seeing a deceitful person brought home. Your lowly lying character—I will not say that it is beyond the power of grace to save him, but I will say this, it is the rarest thing under heaven for a man who has long been a liar ever to be converted. I will say nothing in the praise of human nature, nor give any reason for the absolutely free election of grace, but still I notice that for the most part there is a sort of honest openness and freedom from trickery about those whom the Lord calls to himself. I notice that characteristic in the first fishermen apostles, who were no doubt ignorant and weak, but they were as transparent as glass, and as free from guile as Nathanael. Even in their follies, and their sins, and their blunders they were always open-hearted, and so, in general, are those upon whom the Lord looks with an eye of love. Tricksters come in like Judas, but they go out again, for they are not of us. They experience no change from their association with godliness, or from their knowledge of truth, but would pick the purse of Christ himself, and sell their Redeemer for pieces of silver. Far otherwise is it with a man of candid and thorough spirit, for he is glad to receive the gospel, and it soon displays its gracious power in him. We may say of the candid man as Christ did of this scribe, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

A second point is, perhaps, even more clear. This man also *possessed spiritual knowledge*. It is a great error to suppose that ignorance can do anybody any good. There is a religion which prefers to have ignorant people to deal with, but we have learned the truth of what Solomon said: "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." To be ignorant of the law of God is to be far off from the kingdom; and to be ignorant of the gospel is also to be in a measure far off from the kingdom: but this man knew the law, and knew it well. He had a spiritual appreciation of its range, meaning, and spirituality. Notice how he puts it: he puts it well. He says, "To love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength,—this is the first commandment." Here we see, first, that he mentions *sincere love*, in the words "to love him with all the heart." God is to be loved, not in name, not with lip language, not with mere pretence, but with the heart. God requireth by his law the hearty obedience of his creatures. Next, the scribe puts it, "With all thy understanding"; that is, God deserves and demands the *intelligent* love of his creatures. He does not ask blind love of them: he desires them to know something of him, and of his works, and of his claims upon them, so as to love him because he deserves their affection. The understanding must justify and impel the affections. Then, he puts it, "with all thy soul"; that is, with *the emotional nature*. Love God with feeling—not coolly, but with the whole force of your feeling. Love

him with your soul, for soul love is the soul of love. And then he adds, "and with all thy strength"; that is to say, *intensity* is to be thrown into our love to God. We are to serve him with our might, and throw all our whole energy into his worship. Thus he gives us, under four heads, a description of the kind of love which the law of God requires of us—sincere—"with all thy heart"; intelligent—"with all thy understanding"; emotional—"with all thy soul"; intense and energetic—"with all thy strength." This the scribe knew, and it was most valuable knowledge. Beloved, when a man begins intelligently to grasp the doctrines of the law and the gospel, when we perceive that he is no stranger to divine things, but that he can give a reason for his beliefs, and can state them to others, although we dare not conclude because of this knowledge that such a man is actually in the kingdom of God, we may safely conclude that he is not far from it. Give us candour, and let that candour be attended with enlightenment, and we are sure that the possessor of these things is not far from the kingdom of God.

A third point is more remarkable still, because it is to be feared that hundreds of professed Christians are nothing like so near to the kingdom of heaven as this man was. This scribe *knew the superiority of an inward religion over that which is external*, for he declares, "To love him with all thy heart is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Thousands at this hour are publicly teaching us that the principal point of religion is that you shall be duly and properly baptized and confirmed, and shall reverently and properly receive the sacrament. They lay stress upon your receiving before you have your breakfast, and upon the breaker of the sacred bread having been duly touched on the head by a bishop, and I do not know what else of mere outward circumstance. Books have been written about how the service is to be performed, and how it is not to be performed, and a great noise has been made about a piece of bread which was brought before a court of law. I believe a very great dignitary has been so weak as to certify that this baked dough has been "reverently consumed": and yet this is not a heathen country, nor are we worshippers of fetishes! Great importance is attached to the style of garment, which should be worn by priests on Holy Monday, or Good Friday. Colours vary according to the almanack, and the age of the moon. I must confess I need all my gravity when I think of copes, and girdles, and surplices, and gowns being matters of serious discussion. Surely these poor dupes of superstition are far, very far, from the kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, nor clothing, nor posture, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Their whole line of thought is alien to the mind of God, who is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. In the whole business of exhibitional religion what is there to content the soul? What *can* there be in it to please God? If our God were a royal puppet I could conceive of his being pleased with ceremonial; or if he were like the heathens' idiotic deities I could understand that mummeries, masquerades, postures, processions, robes, and round-robins might please him; but seeing that he is God, the only wise, be it far from me to dream of such a thing. Such child's play can scarce be borne with by full-grown men, but for that glorious mind that filleth all immensity to be thought to be particular about the cut and colour of a vestment

seems to me to be little short of blasphemy. When the thing was typical of truth yet to be revealed, it was important; but now that the true light has risen, and the shadows have departed, no such explanation is possible. Can it really be true that courts of law and assemblies of the church discuss the question of men's turning to the east or to the west when they pray? Is it thought to be of some consequence how men shall turn, and twist, and bend? What god is this that they serve? What being is this that they adore? Certainly not Jehovah, the God of heaven, whom we worship, for he "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," that is to say, of this building; and he hath abolished all rubrics save this:—"they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Only spiritual worship *is* worship, and only as the heart adores does God accept the homage which is offered to him. This scribe knew that even whole burnt offerings, though God had ordained them, and they were therefore right, and sacrifices, though the law had settled them, and they were therefore due, were nothing when compared with loving God with all the heart and with all the soul. He expresses this most plainly that "to love God with all the heart is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And see how broadly he puts it—"*All* whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" put together. If they could slay all the bullocks upon a thousand hills, and set Lebanon's self on fire, making it one huge altar upon which the holocaust should smoke, and even if they should pour out rivers of oil, and side by side with it ran streams of blood of fat beasts, yet all would be nothing. Who hath required this at their hands? The Lord's demands are not of this sort. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." What God asks is that we should love him first of all, and our neighbour as ourselves. Now, a man who has come so far as to shake off the superstition of confidence in external worship is not far from the kingdom of God. He who knows that if saved it will be by a spiritual change, and not by going to a place of worship, not by repeating prayers, not by joining a church, not by being baptized, not by taking the sacrament, knows more than many; and he who also knows that loving God with all his heart is an absolutely needful evidence of his being a child of God, and longs to feel that love, is not far from the kingdom. A sense of the value and necessity of spiritual religion is a most hopeful sign. I do not say that it is a sure sign of saving grace; but I am sure it is a token of being very near the kingdom. Oh that the man would take the one step which is now needed by turning his knowledge into practice! Oh that he would believe with all his heart, and live!

Another point is manifest in this man's confession; *he saw very plainly the supremacy of God over the whole of our manhood.* It was clear to him that there was but one God, and that man was made on purpose to be one and undivided in his service. He perceived that man should love, honour, and serve that one God with all his heart, with all his heart, with all his understanding, with all his soul, and with all his strength. Do you know that, dear friend? Come now, if you are not a saved man, I will ask you—do you recognize this to be true, that it is your bounden duty to serve your God with all your heart and understanding, and soul, and strength? Do you admit this? If you do, and if you are an honest man, you are not far from the kingdom of God,

because honest men earnestly endeavour to pay their debts, and when they find that they cannot, they are distressed. If you are in distress of mind because you cannot meet your obligations to God, then you are not far from the kingdom. I rejoice in your discovery of shortcoming, failure, and inability, for these lie near that hearty penitence which is the sister of saving faith, and the sure herald of joy and peace. When a man feels his own inability to do as he ought, when he trembles before the law which, nevertheless, he honours and admits to be just and right, then he is not far from self-renunciation, and from accepting that matchless righteousness which Jesus Christ has come to bring. A consciousness of the supremacy of the sovereignty of God over us, so that he ought to have every thought, every breath, every pulse, is the work of the Spirit, who thereby convinces us of sin, and it is a sweet sign of dawn in the once darkened soul. Admit that God ought to be heartily loved, and you are not far from loving him; feel that you are guilty for not loving, and the seeds of love are in your heart.

Once more only. Although this hopeful scribe recognized the value of spiritual religion, and the need of heart-work, and of the heart being wholly given to God, *yet he did not despise outward religion so far as it was commanded of God.* He says that to love God is better than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices; which was an admission that these things were good in their places. He was no rejecter of ceremonies which are commanded, because of the superstition of will-worshippers who invent ceremonies. We are not to give up the baptism of believers because of the unscriptural rite of infant sprinkling, nor to forsake the Lord's Supper because of the popish mass. Ordinances of God are good in their places, and what is to be dreaded is the perversion of them by thrusting them into the place of better and more important matters. Thus the scribe showed a well-balanced mind all round, and proved himself not far from the kingdom of God.

My dear friend, are you prepared to lay hold of truth wherever you find it? Are you prepared to break away from party ties and family prejudices? Are you prepared to believe that the inward and spiritual part of religion is infinitely superior to the external part of it, be it right or be it wrong? Do you also admit the divine supremacy of God, and his right to you in all respects? And are you willing to take ordinances, such as he has ordained, in their place, and not out of it? Then, if all these things be in you, your character resembles that of this scribe of whom Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." I am right glad to meet with you, for you are not far from submitting to the divine authority, since you are already found admitting its right to you. I trust you are not far from entering into the realm of spiritual religion, for you already value it. You are not far from the privilege of being wholly renewed in heart, since you see the need of it. How glad I am that you should be now listening to the gospel! Happier still shall I be if God shall help me to say the right word to you at this good hour. The Lord send it!

II. Our second point is THE QUESTION SUGGESTED—*this man came so near to the kingdom: did he ever enter it?* We do not know. If anybody were to assert that he did not I should be ready to question his statement. If anybody were to declare that he did I should at once

demand his authority for the assertion. We receive no information from the Scriptures, and it is always better where the word of God is silent to be silent ourselves. We should also observe another very good rule: if you have to judge of a man's state, and know but little of it always judge it favourably. Judges usually give a prisoner the benefit of the doubt; and when a man is not a prisoner, when he has come so far towards grace as this scribe, let us at any rate hope that he did enter into the kingdom.

I see no reason why he should not have done so; and that is my first answer to the question. He should have done so. Having come so far there were many doors by which, God's Spirit being with him, he might have entered into the kingdom; I mean doors of thought, by which the Holy Spirit would readily have led his candid mind into the faith of Christ. I will show you one. There was in after years another scribe, a rabbi—you will recollect his name—who said, "I consent unto the law, that it is good; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." You see the process of thought. It is a very simple one. This scribe sees the law of God to be a spiritual law, demanding the obedience of his heart, his understanding, his soul, and his strength. If he had thought awhile he would, as a candid man, have said, "I have not kept this law. What is more, I cannot keep it. If I try to keep it I find a something within me against which I struggle, but which, nevertheless, brings me into captivity to another law—a law of selfishness, a law of sin." Then, as a man anxious to be right, he would have said, "How can I be delivered? Oh that I might be set free to keep the law of God! I cannot abide in this bondage. I ought to keep this law. I shall never be happy till I do love God with all my heart, for he ought to be so loved, and I perceive that there can be no heaven to a heart which does not love God intensely, for this is one of the essentials of peace and rest. How can I get at it?" In such a condition as that, if he had heard the sweet invitation of our Lord, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," would he not have leaped at the sound? Do you not see the simple doorway for such a man as that to become a Christian? He had come so far that surely he should come a little farther. Let us trust that he did. At any rate, if any of you have come so far, may God's sweet Spirit lead you to take those other steps, and to enter into the kingdom, submitting to the sweet sovereignty of the Prince Immanuel, whose sceptre is of silver, and whose servitude is an honour and a delight to all his subjects.

That is one door; now follow with me another track. Suppose this man had really loved God with all his heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength—I will not say perfectly, for that would be supposing an impossibility, but supposing that he had truly and sincerely loved God, he could not have been an hour in the company of the Lord Jesus without feeling the deepest union of heart to him. Would he not have exclaimed, "This man, too, loves God with all his heart"? He must have perceived it, for the zeal which Christ had for the Father was immeasurable; it flashed in every gleam of his eye, it

tinctured every word that fell from his lips. Jesus lived for God, and glorified the Father with all his heart and soul, and any person who truly loved God would soon have perceived that fact. "Ah!" he would have exclaimed, "here is one who loves God better than I do; here is one who honours God more than I do; here is one who is more consecrated, more devoted, more godlike than I am." By that door he would have been led to admiration of Jesus, to communion with him, and ultimately to belief in him as the Messiah. Let us hope that the scribe was so led, for the way is plain enough. At any rate, if God in his grace has led any man here to love the Father, I am persuaded that he will love the Son; for he that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. My hearer, thou art certainly not far from the kingdom of God if thou hast come so far as to love God, even though thou knowest little as yet of his only begotten Son. God help you to take that one other step.

Here is another door. You notice that he said that to love God was more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Now, suppose that with that in his mind, he had sat down, and said, "This loving God is the main thing; why, then, is the law encumbered with burnt offerings and sacrifices? If they really are inferior to the moral precepts, and especially to the spiritual precepts, why are they there at all?" Then methinks he would have seen that they must be there for a spiritual purpose. And suppose he had begun to try and read the meaning of the paschal lamb, or of the daily lamb, or of the sin-offering, why, methinks, if he turned to that blessed fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and began to read it in order to understand the sacrifices of the old law, it would have happened to him as it did to the eunuch when Philip opened to him the Scriptures—he would have seen Jesus in them all. He must have seen him. And if you, dear friend, have come to see the right place of gospel ordinances through candidly searching out their meaning, you have seen that their whole teaching is Christ Jesus, the sacrifice for sin. There is nothing in the two great gospel ordinances but Christ. Christ's sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection set forth in baptism: Christ's death set forth until he come at the communion table—life given us by our Saviour's death, and life sustained by the same means. Jesus is the body of the ordinances of the Old Testament, and the soul of those of the New. If you are but candid enough to desire to push through the veil, and get at the real meaning of every outward ordinance, you will see Jesus ere long.

There is another road by which the scribe might have been led to the Saviour. Think again. Suppose that he had continued to glow and burn with love to God. As that love grew the understanding would also become enlightened with it, and the soul would rise towards God. You know why that would be. It must be because the Holy Spirit was in the man, for no man loveth God or striveth to love God, with all his heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength, without there being in secret and unknown to him a divine power at the back impelling him in that direction. Now, do you think that the Holy Spirit would thus work in the man and not reveal Christ to him for his salvation? I cannot believe it. I am persuaded that, coming as that man did under the gospel of Christ, he would be by his candour, by his love of God, by the

influence of the divine Spirit, in such a state of mind that, as when sparks fall upon dry tinder they ignite at once, so would the words of Jesus fall upon a mind prepared of the Spirit of God. That scribe was, therefore, not far from the kingdom of God. I do hope that there are some such hearts present at this hour. Some of you, I trust, can say, "Oh that I had Christ! I would give my eyes for him." If you mean that, why do you not have him? He is to be had for nothing. "Oh," says another, "I would die if I might have him and be saved." Why not live, and be saved? "Oh, but I would give anything." Why not leave off the idea of giving, and take freely what Jesus presents to you? But yet that very desire of yours—that longing of yours—proves that you are not far from the kingdom of God. My heart's desire is that as you have come so far you may now yield yourselves up to Jesus. That is the way of salvation: have done with self-salvation and let Jesus save you. When a man is in the water, if he kicks and struggles he will drown, but if he lies still he will float. When another comes to help, if he will be passive he will be saved, but all that he can do will hinder his deliverance. Be passive in the hands of Christ till he gives you life to be active with. Be nothing, and let him be everything. Trust him wholly and alone. Drop into his arms, and let him bear the weight of your sins and sorrows, and it shall not be said of you any longer that you are not far from the kingdom of God, but it shall be sung on earth and in heaven—"He has returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, glory be to God!"

Still, as I have said, there is the dark supposition that *perhaps the scribe never did enter the kingdom.* He may have been so near to the kingdom, and yet he may have lacked the one thing needful. If it were so, it was a grievous fact; and all we can now do is to profit by it. What could have been the reason why he did not enter the kingdom? I cannot tell, we know so little of him; but if we might infer from the little we do know, I should suppose that if he did not enter it was from the unworthy motive of being swayed by his fellow-men. We judged that when he came to Christ to put the question, he came not of his own mind and motion. We began by thinking that he seemed half-hearted in his opposition, and that so he the more readily turned from a questioner into a candid admirer. It is, however, just possible that, being the spokesman for others, he had grown fond of taking the lead; and if he did not really enter the kingdom, it may have been because he would have lost his place in the front rank of scribe and pharisee, and this was too great a price to pay for truth and righteousness. I have known a man deeply impressed with religious things, and feeling his way aright; but a little company of half a dozen whom he met in the evening, of whom he was the leading spirit, have sufficed to hold him in bondage. They invite him to come again; they miss his genial society, his jest, his song, his merry talk. He cannot face it out, and tell them that he has a call elsewhere, a call to nobler things. He has not the resolute will to lead them in another direction, and dreads even to make the attempt. He wants to be the leading man; and so he gives up what his conscience suggests to him rather than not be the leader of men whom in his heart he must know to be unworthy of such a homage. In his own mind he thinks them fools; but, still, he is afraid that they should think *him*

so, and therefore he becomes a greater and more guilty fool than they. Oh, that fear of men, that fear of men! You may meet with here and there a man of the better sort who begins to feel, "Yes, there is the light there: light worth having." He breaks away from his party, and its surroundings, and for a while is eager for the truth, which he has half discovered; but he fears the cold shoulder which society would give him, dreads the jeer of "Sir John," and the sneer of "My Lord." The half-opened eye is closed with saddest determination from fear of other children of darkness, who would mock at its better sight. This is a sight which might make an angel weep. Jesus is sold, but not for so much as clinked in the hand of Judas; he is bartered for a fool's smile, and for the company of the vain and frivolous. Ah me, that ever the sun should behold so dread a sight! Multitudes who know the truth, and are not far from the kingdom of God, nevertheless, never enter it, because of the fear of man, the love of approbation, the horror of being laughed at and jested at. With such vile fetters immortal souls are bound for execution, and held back from everlasting blessedness. There is something very beautiful about many a young man of enquiring mind, and if you could transplant him, and set him in another soil, you might make something of him; but not in that shop, where all his fellows would make him the butt of their mirth if he were really a Christian, not in that work-room, where all the artisans would swear and chaff if he were but to avow his half-formed convictions. Want of courage, want of self-denial, is that fatal flaw which ruins what else had been a gem in the Redeemer's crown. All brave hearts mournfully pronounce that he is justly lost who is not bold enough to own his Saviour, and the truth.

> "I had as lief not be, as live to be
> In awe of such a thing as I myself."

Afraid of another man! Am I then myself a man? Or am I but the mere mockery of manhood? Oh, sirs, let your manhood come to the rescue. God grant you grace to say, "What can it matter to me what men say as long as I am right?" They cannot break bones with their jests; and if they did, there have been Christians who have not only suffered the breaking of their bones, but the burning of their whole bodies for Christ's sake sooner than deny his sacred claims. What did Jesus say? "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." He who, to gain the whole world, would keep back a solitary truth, is a huge loser for his pains. He is mean and base, and not worthy to be numbered amongst those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Oh! if I speak to one who hesitates, let me remind him that, however it may look to-night to be a daring step to be decided for Christ, it will look very differently soon when the great trumpet shall sound, and ring o'er earth and sea, and the dead shall rise, and the judgment-seat shall be set, and the great white throne shall be unveiled. Then it will be seen to be a far more desperate daring to deny the Lord even to save life itself. What will the cowards do in that day who, to please men, forsook their Lord? What will they do who suppressed truth and stifled conscience when the Shepherd begins to divide the goats and the sheep from each other? Ay, what will they do who find themselves

driven with the goats, though once they half decided to be numbered with the sheep? They were near the fold, but never entered. What will they feel when he shall say, "Depart! Depart! I know you not. You knew not me in the day of my humiliation. You were ashamed of me in the world. You blushed at my name. You covered up what was in your conscience in order to avoid man's laughter and rebuke. You knew not me, and now I know not you. Depart! Depart!" In proportion to the light against which you have shut your eyes will be your horror when that light shall blind you into eternal night. In proportion to the violence which you have done to your consciences will be the terror which your awakened consciences will work in you. In proportion to the nearness of the kingdom within which you came shall be the dreadful distance to which you will be driven.

I was thinking that, if the Lord were to pay men in their own coin, what an awful thing it would be if those who are now not far from the kingdom were told by the Lord, "You shall stay there for ever. You, who heard the gospel, and did not accept it, must stop where you are." Halt, sir! not a step more! Close to the gates of heaven—you stop there! To hear its music for ever, and to gnash your teeth for ever, because you cannot join in it! To hear the songs of the righteous, while you wail for ever! To know the brightness of bliss, but to be yourself in the black darkness for ever! To be within an inch of heaven, and yet in hell! The living water flowing at your feet, and yet your tongue for ever parched! The bread of life nigh at hand, and yet you cannot eat! Oh, think of it! Eternally not far from the kingdom! If you would not wish to be so, oh, be not out of Christ another minute! May God's Spirit enable you to leap right away from your undecided condition into living faith and loving obedience to Christ.

"So near to the Kingdom! yet what dost thou lack?
So near to the Kingdom! what keepeth thee back?
Renounce every idol, tho' dear it may be,
And come to the Saviour now pleading with thee."

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Nothing remains to report to you but my hope of being in my own pulpit on Feb. 8. I beg you to join with me in thanks to the healing Lord for this restoration. The Lord bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up again, and to him be praise for ever.

It would be a great favour to me personally, and a means of good to many, if the readers of the sermons would aid in increasing their circulation. They are already very widely scattered, but if twice the number could be sent abroad we might look for double fruit. After standing the test of twenty-five years the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit may be pardoned if it asks those who profit by the sermons to introduce them to others.

May future discourses be more full of unction and power, and so may you, dear readers, reap a harvest from my pains and sicknesses.

Yours ever heartily,

Mentone, January 22, 1880. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BELOVED, AND YET AFFLICTED.

Notes of a Sermon

ACHED BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF INVALID LADIES AT MENTONE, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."—John xi. 3.

r disciple whom Jesus loved is not at all backward to record that s loved Lazarus too: there are no jealousies among those who are n by the Well-beloved. Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and rus: it is a happy thing where a whole family live in the love of . They were a favoured trio, and yet, as the serpent came into lise, so did sorrow enter their quiet household at Bethany. Lazarus ick. They all felt that if Jesus were there disease would flee at resence; what then should they do but let him know of their ? Lazarus was near to death's door, and so his tender sisters at reported the fact to Jesus, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou is sick." Many a time since then has that same message been to our Lord, for in full many a case he has chosen his people in urnace of affliction. Of the Master it is said, "himself took our ities, and bare our sicknesses," and it is, therefore, no extraordinary for the members to be in this matter conformed to their Head.

Notice, first, A FACT mentioned in the text: "Lord, behold, he n thou lovest is sick." The sisters were somewhat astonished that uld be so, for the word "behold" implies a measure of surprise. love him, and would make him well directly: *thou* lovest him, and e remains sick. Thou canst heal him with a word, why then is ved one sick?" Have not you, dear sick friend, often wondered your painful or lingering disease could be consistent with your chosen, and called, and made one with Christ? I dare say this greatly perplexed you, and yet in very truth it is by no means ge, but a thing to be expected.

need not be astonished that the man whom the Lord loves is for *he is only a man*. The love of Jesus does not separate us from mmon necessities and infirmities of human life. Men of God are nen. The covenant of grace is not a charter of exemption from mption, or rheumatism, or asthma. The bodily ills, which come us because of our flesh, will attend us to the tomb, for Paul saith, hat are in this body do groan."

se whom the Lord loves are the more likely to be sick, since they der *a peculiar discipline*. It is written, "Whom the Lord loveth steneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Affliction

[illegible] some sort is one of the marks of the true-born child of God, and [illegible] seems that the trial takes the form of illness. Shall [illegible] for that we have to take our turn in the sick chambe[illegible] and Hezekiah must each one smart, who are [illegible] shall be amazed because we are in ill-health?

Nor is it remarkable that we are sick if we reflect upon the gre[illegible] *ourselves.* I do not know wh[illegible] may have been wrought in Lazarus, but many [illegible] would have been of small use if he had not be[illegible] Young men are apt to be harsh, imperious, and unsymp[illegible] therefore they need to be put into the furnace, and melte[illegible] have known Christian women who would never have been [illegible] wise, experienced, and holy if they had not been mellowe[illegible] by physical pain. There are fruits in God's garden as well as i[illegible] which never ripen till they are bruised. Young women who ar[illegible] volatile, conceited, or talkative, are often trained to be fu[illegible] sweetness and light by sickness after sickness, by which they ar[illegible] taught to sit at Jesus' feet. Many have been able to say with th[illegible] psalmist, "It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might lear[illegible] thy statutes." For this reason even such as are highly favoured an[illegible] blessed among women may feel a sword piercing through their hearts.

Oftentimes this sickness of the Lord's loved ones is *for the good o[illegible] others.* Lazarus was permitted to be sick and to die, that by his deat[illegible] and resurrection the apostles might be benefited. His sickness wa[illegible] "for the glory of God." Throughout these nineteen hundred year[illegible] which have succeeded Lazarus' sickness all believers have been gettin[illegible] good out of it, and this afternoon we are all the better because h[illegible] languished and died. The church and the world may derive immens[illegible] advantage through the sorrows of good men: the careless may b[illegible] awakened, the doubting may be convinced, the ungodly may be con[illegible] verted, the mourner may be comforted through our testimony in sick[illegible] ness; and if so, would we wish to avoid pain and weakness? Are we no[illegible] quite willing that our friends should say of us also "Lord, behold, h[illegible] whom thou lovest is sick"?

II. Our text, however, not only records a fact, but mentions a[illegible] manner of that fact: the sisters sent and told Jesus. Let us keep up a constant correspondence with our Lord about everything.

> "Sing a hymn to Jesus, when thy heart is faint;
> Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."

Jesus knows all about us, but *it is a great relief to pour out our hearts [illegible]* When John the Baptist's broken-hearted disciples saw their leader beheaded, "they took up the body, and went and told Jesus." They could not have done better. In all trouble send a message to Jesus, and do not keep your misery to yourself. In his case there is no need of reserve, there is no fear of his treating you with cold pride, or heartless indifference, or cruel treachery. He is a confidant who never can betray us, a friend who never will refuse us.

There is this fair hope about telling Jesus, that *he is sure to support [illegible] under it.* If you go to Jesus, and ask, "Most gracious Lord, why [illegible] I sick? I thought I was useful while in health, and now I can do

nothing; why is this?" he may be pleased to show you why, or, if not, he will make you willing to bear his will with patience without knowing why. He can bring his truth to your mind to cheer you, or strengthen your heart by his presence, or send you unexpected comforts, and give you to glory in your afflictions. "Ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Not in vain did Mary and Martha send to tell Jesus, and not in vain do any seek his face.

Remember, too, that *Jesus may give healing.* It would not be wise to live by a supposed faith, and cast off the physician and his medicines, any more than to discharge the butcher, and the tailor, and expect to be fed and clothed by faith; but this would be far better than forgetting the Lord altogether, and trusting to man only. Healing for both body and soul must be sought from God. We make use of medicines, but these can do nothing apart from the Lord, "who healeth all our diseases." We may tell Jesus about our aches and pains, and gradual declinings, and hacking coughs. Some persons are afraid to go to God about their health: they pray for the pardon of sin, but dare not ask the Lord to remove a headache: and, yet, surely, if the hairs outside our head are all numbered by God it is not much more of a condescension for him to relieve throbs and pressures inside the head. Our big things must be very little to the great God, and our little things cannot be much less. It is a proof of the greatness of the mind of God that while ruling the heavens and the earth, he is not so absorbed by these great concerns as to be forgetful of the least pain or want of any one of his poor children. We may go to him about our failing breath, for he first gave us lungs and life. We may tell him about the eye which grows dim, and the ear which loses hearing, for he made them both. We may mention the swollen knee, and the gathering finger, the stiff neck, and the sprained foot, for he made all these our members, redeemed them all, and will raise them all from the grave. Go at once, and say, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

III. Thirdly, let us notice in the case of Lazarus A RESULT which we should not have expected. No doubt when Mary and Martha sent to tell Jesus they looked to see Lazarus recover as soon as the messenger reached the Master; but they were not gratified. For two days the Lord remained in the same place, and not till he knew that Lazarus was dead did he speak of going to Judæa. This teaches us that Jesus may be informed of our trouble, and yet may act as if he were indifferent to it. We must not expect in every case that prayer for recovery will be answered, for if so, nobody would die who had chick or child, friend or acquaintance to pray for him. In our prayers for the lives of beloved children of God we must not forget that there is one prayer which may be crossing ours, for Jesus prays, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We pray that they may remain with us, but when we recognise that Jesus wants them above, what can we do but admit his larger claim and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"? In our own case, we may pray the Lord to raise us up, and yet though he loves us he may permit us to grow worse and worse, and at last to die. Hezekiah had fifteen years added to his life, but we may not gain the reprieve of a single day. Never set such store by the

life of any one dear to you, or even by your own life, as to be rebellic against the Lord. If you hold the life of any dear one with too tigh hand, you are making a rod for your own back; and if you love yo own earthly life too well, you are making a thorny pillow for your dyi bed. Children are often idols, and in such cases their too ardent lov are idolatries. We might as well make a god of clay, and worship it, the Hindoos are said to do, as worship our fellow-creatures, for wh are they but clay? Shall dust be so dear to us that we quarrel with o God about it? If our Lord leaves us to suffer, let us not repine. I must do that for us which is kindest and best, for he loves us better th we love ourselves.

Did I hear you say, "Yes, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die, *but he rais him up again*"? I answer, he is the resurrection and the life to us als Be comforted concerning the departed. "Thy brother shall rise again and all of us whose hope is in Jesus shall partake in our Lord's resu rection. Not only shall our souls live, but our bodies, too, shall l raised incorruptible. The grave will serve as a refining pot, and th vile body shall come forth vile no longer. Some Christians are great cheered by the thought of living till the Lord comes, and so escapir death. I confess that I think this no great gain, for so far from havir any preference over them that are asleep, those who are alive and remai at his coming will miss one point of fellowship, in not dying and risir like their Lord. Beloved, all things are yours, and death is express mentioned in the list, therefore do not dread it, but rather "long f evening to undress, that you may rest with God."

IV. I will close with A QUESTION—"Jesus loved Martha, and h sister, and Lazarus"—does Jesus in a special sense love you? Ala many sick ones have no evidence of any special love of Jesus toward them, for they have never sought his face, nor trusted in him. Jesu might say to them "I never knew you," for they have turned their back upon his blood and his cross. Answer, dear friend, to your own hea this question, "Do you love Jesus?" If so, you love him because h first loved you. Are you trusting him? If so, that faith of yours is th proof that he has loved you from before the foundation of the world for faith is the token by which he plights his troth to his beloved.

If Jesus loves you, and you are sick, let all the world see how yo glorify God in your sickness. Let friends and nurses see how th beloved of the Lord are cheered and comforted by him. Let your hol resignation astonish them, and set them admiring your Beloved, who i so gracious to you that he makes you happy in pain, and joyful at th gates of the grave. If your religion is worth anything it ought t support you now, and it will compel unbelievers to see that he whon the Lord loveth is in better case when he is sick than the ungodly whe full of health and vigour.

If you do not know that Jesus loves you, you lack the brightest sta that can cheer the night of sickness. I hope you will not die as you no are, and pass into another world without enjoying the love of Jesus that would be a terrible calamity indeed. Seek his face at once, and i may be that your present sickness is a part of the way of love by whicl Jesus would bring you to himself. Lord, heal all these sick ones in sou and in body. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AT SCHOOL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God."—Psalm cxliii. 10.

THIS is a prayer about doing, but it is perfectly free from legal taint. The man who offered it had no idea of being saved by his doings, for in the second verse of the psalm he had said, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." This is not the prayer of a sinner seeking salvation, for salvation is not by doing the will of God but by believing in Christ. It is the prayer of the man who is already saved, and who being saved devotes himself to the service of God, and wishes to be taught in the fear of the Lord. "Teach me to do thy will, O God."

The connection leads us to make the remark that David looked upon the doing of God's will as his best escape from his enemies. He speaks of his cruel persecutors. He declares that though he looked all around he could find none who would help him. Then he prays, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God." And depend upon it, the surest way to escape from harm is to do no ill. If you are surrounded by those who would slander you, your best defence is a blameless life; and if many are watching for your halting and maliciously desiring your fall, your safety lies in holiness. The very best prayer you can pray for your own protection is, "Teach me to do thy will." If you do right none can harm you.

This prayer was suggested by the perplexity of the psalmist's mind. He was overwhelmed, and did not know what to do, and therefore he cried, "Teach me to do *thy* will, O God." He had come to a place where many roads met, and he did not know which path to take; and so he prayed God to guide him in the way appointed. I commend this prayer to all who may be sorely puzzled and anxious. You have exercised your own judgment, and you have, perhaps, too much consulted with friends, and yet your way seems entirely blocked up: then resort to God with this as your heart's prayer, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God."

May the Spirit of God now bless us while we open up this short prayer that we may be helped to understand it, and use it. First, we will speak upon *the prayer;* and then, secondly, upon *its answer.*

I. And, first, THE PRAYER ITSELF—let us notice its character.

It is a *holy prayer.* "Teach me to do thy will." The man who utters this language desires to be free from sin, for sin can never be God's will. Under no circumstances whatever may I do wrong and fancy that I am doing God's will therein. I have read of an extremely poor man who wanted fuel for the fire for his children, and the text came to his mind, "All things are yours." Armed with this text, he thought he would take a little wood from his neighbour's wood-pile; but very happily there came to his mind another text, "Thou shalt not steal." He was quite clear about its meaning, and so he let the wood alone; but he recollected afterwards how that text had saved him from a great transgression. Depend upon it, whatever circumstances or impressions may seem to say, it is never God's will that you should do wrong. There are devil's providences as well as God's providences. When Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish, he found a ship going thither; and I dare say he said "How providential!" Yes, but no providence can ever be an excuse for sinning against God. We are to do right, and therefore we pray, "Teach me to do thy will."

It is a *humble prayer*—the prayer of a man of deep experience, and yet, for all that, and perhaps because of that, a man who felt that he needed teaching as to every step he should take. When you do not want teaching, brother, it is because you are too stupid to learn: you may depend upon that. It is only a very young lady fresh from a boarding-school, who has "finished her education," and it is only a great fool of a man who thinks that he can learn no more. Those who know themselves best, and know the world best, and know God best, always have the lowest thoughts of themselves. They have no wisdom of their own except this, that they are wise enough to flee from their own wisdom, and say to the Lord, "Teach me to do thy will." This is a holy prayer and a humble prayer, and commends itself to every holy and humble heart.

It is, dear friends, *a docile prayer*—the prayer of a teachable man. "Teach me to do thy will." It is not merely, you see, "Teach me thy will," but "Teach me to do it." The person is so ignorant that he needs to be taught how to do anything and everything. You may tell a child how to walk, but it will not walk for all that. You must teach it to walk. You must take it by the arms as God did Ephraim. He says, "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," just as a nurse teaches her little ones. "Teach me to do." Lord, it is not enough that thou teach my head and teach my heart, but teach my hands and my feet. "Teach me to do thy will." Such a suppliant is docile, and ready to learn.

It is an *acquiescent prayer* also, which is a great thing in its favour. "Teach me to do *thy* will—not mine. I will put my will on one side." He does not say, "Lord, teach me to do part of thy will, that part which pleases me," but all thy will. If there be any part of thy will which I am not pleased with, for that very reason teach it to me, until my whole soul shall be conformed to thy mind, and I shall love thy will, not because it happens to be pleasing, but because it is thy will. It is a prayer of resignation and self-abnegation, and is, perhaps, one of the highest that the Christian can pray, though it may well befit the learner who stands for the first time at wisdom's door.

And then notice that it is a *believing prayer*—"Teach me to do thy will; *for thou art my God.*" There is faith in God in this claim. "Thou art my God;" and there is faith in God's condescension that he will act as a Teacher. Brethren, we have two faults. We do not think God to be so great as he is, and we do not think God can be so little as he can be. We err on both sides, and neither know his height of glory nor his depth of grace. We practically say, "This trial is too mean; I will bear it without him." We forget that the same God who rules the stars condescends to be a Teacher, and teaches us to do his will. We heard once of a president of a great nation who nevertheless taught in a Sunday-school: it was thought to be great condescension, but what shall I say of him who, while he sits amid the choirs of angels and accepts their praises, comes down to his little children and teaches them to do his will! The prayer before us is very precious, for it is holy, humble, docile, acquiescent, and believing.

Let us now notice what the actual request is. In so many words it says, "Teach me to do thy will." So, brethren and sisters, it is *a practical prayer*. He does not say merely, "Teach me to know thy will"—a very excellent prayer that; but there are a great many who stick fast in the knowing, and do not go on to the doing; these are forgetful hearers, deceiving themselves. An ounce of doing is worth a ton of knowing. The most orthodox faith in the world, if it be accompanied by an unholy life, will only increase a man's damnation. There must be the yielding up of the members and of the mind unto God in obedience, or else the more we know the greater will be our condemnation.

The psalmist does not say, "Lord, help me to talk about thy will," though it is a very proper thing to talk about, and a very profitable thing to hear about. But still doing is better than talking. If *t's* were *w's* there would be more saints in the world than there are; that is to say, if those who *t*alk uprightly would also *w*alk uprightly it would be well; but with many the talk is better than the walk. Better a silent tongue than an unclean life. Practical godliness is preferable to the sweetest eloquence.

The prayer is, "Teach me to do *thy will.*" There are some who long to be taught in all mysteries; and truly to understand a mystery aright is a great privilege, but their main thought seems to be to know the deep doctrines, the mysterious points. Many go into prophecy, and a nice muddle they make when they get there. We have had I do not know how many theories of prophecy, each one of them more absurd than the rest, and so it will be, I fear, to the world's end. Truly, it would be a good thing to understand the prophecies, and all knowledge, "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"; and that excellent way is to live a life of humble, godly dependence and faith, and to show forth in your life the love that was in Christ Jesus. Lord, I chiefly long to know thy will: teach me that, and I am content.

I have already said that this prayer asks that we may do God's will, not our own. Oh! how naturally our heart prays, "Lord, let me have my own way." That is the first prayer of human nature when it is let alone; "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? Let me have my own way." That desire will sometimes enter the Christian's heart, though I hope it will not long remain there. We may be praying,

"Lord, not my will, but thine be done," and yet the wicked, rebellious heart may be saying inside, "But do let it be my will, Lord: do let it be my will." Still do we cling to self. May the Lord deliver us from Lord Will-be-will, who is a terrible tyrant wherever he rules; and may this be our prayer, "Teach me to do thy will."

We are not to ask to do other people's will, though some persons are always slaves to the wills of others. Whatever their company is that are they. In Rome they do as Rome does: they try to accommodate themselves to their family; they cannot take a stand, or be decided, but they are ruled and governed, poor slaves that they are, by their connections. They fear the frown of man. Oh that they would rise to something nobler, and pray, "Lord, teach me to do thy will, whether it is the will of the great ones of the earth, or the will of my influential friends, or the will of my loud talking neighbours or not. Help me to do *thy* will, to take my stand, and say, 'As for me and my house, *we* will serve the Lord.'" It is a blessed prayer. The more we look at it the more we see in it.

What does he mean by doing God's will? Does he not mean, "Help me to do as thy word bids me"? For the will of God is put before us very plainly in *his law*, and, especially, in that law as viewed in the hand of Christ. "This is the will of God, even our sanctification." To serve him devoutly, and to love our neighbour as ourselves—this is the will of God. May his Spirit help us. "Teach me to do thy will, O God."

That will also takes the form of *providence*. Out of two courses equally right we sometimes have to ask the question, "Lord, what is thy will here?" There is nothing immoral in either the one or the other, and hence our difficulty, and then we come to the Lord and say, "Here is a case in which thy law does not guide me, otherwise I should decide at once, but wilt thou now show me what thou wilt have me to do?" In another case the will of God may be suggested by *opportunity*. Dear friend, the will of God is that you should speak to that friend sitting near you about soul-matters. The will of God is that your unconverted servant should have your prayers and your instruction. God puts men in our way on purpose that we may do them good. I have no doubt whatever that many a Christian is made to go where he would not choose to go, and to associate with persons that he would not wish to associate with, on purpose that he may be the means of taking light into dark places, and of carrying life from God to dead souls. So that if you pray this prayer, "Teach me to do thy will," and carry it out, you will watch for opportunities of serving the Lord.

The prayer seems to me to have all that compass, and much more.

But I would answer another enquiry. *What is the intention of the prayer as to manner?* It does not say, "Lord, enable me to do thy will," but, "*Teach* me to do thy will," as if there were some peculiar way of doing it that had to be taught, as when a young man goes apprentice to acquire a trade. Lord, I would put myself under indentures to thy grace that thou mayest teach me the art and mystery of doing thy will.

How then ought God's will to be done?

It should be done *thoughtfully*. A great many Christians are not half as considerate as they should be. We should go through life, not flippantly like the butterfly that flits from flower to flower, but like the bee

that stays and sucks honey, and gathers sweet store for the hive. We should be seriously in earnest; and one point of earnestness should be

"With holy trembling, holy fear,
To make my calling sure,
Thine utmost counsel to fulfil,
And suffer all thy righteous will,
And to the end endure."

Lord, help me to do thy will, seriously bending all my soul to the doing of it; not trifling in thy courts, nor making life a play, but loving thee with my understanding.

The Lord's will should be done *immediately*. As soon as a command is known it should be obeyed. Lord, suffer me not to consult with flesh and blood. Make me prompt and quick of understanding in the fear of God. Teach me to do thy will as angels do, who no sooner hear thy word than they fly like flames of fire to fulfil thy behests.

His will should by done *cheerfully*. Jehovah seeks not slaves to grace his throne. He would have us delight to do his will: yea, his law should be in our heart. Oh! brothers and sisters, you need to pray this: "Teach me to do thy will," or else you will miss the mark.

Teach me to do it *constantly*. Let me not sometimes be thy servant, and then run away from thee. Keep me to it. Let me never weary. When the morning wakes me may it find me ready, and when the evening bids me rest may I be serving thee until I fall asleep.

Teach me to do it also, Lord, *universally*, not some part of it, but all of it, not one of thy commands being neglected, nor one single part of my daily task being left undone. I am thy servant; make me to be what a good servant is to her mistress, neglecting none of the cares of the household. May I be watchful in all points.

Teach me to do thy will *spiritually*, not making the outside of cups and platters clean, but obeying thee within my soul. May what I do be done with all my heart. If I pray, help me to pray in the spirit. If I sing, let my heart make music unto thee. When I am talking to others about thy name, and trying to spread the savour of Jesus, let me not do it in my own strength, or in a wrong spirit, but may the Holy Ghost be upon me.

Teach me to do thy will *intensely*. Let the zeal of thy house eat me up. Oh that I might throw my whole self into it.

This little prayer grows, does it not? Pray it, brothers and sisters, and may the Lord answer you.

Once again, there are necessary qualities which we must seek if we would sincerely pray this prayer, "Teach me to do thy will." Then, you must have *decision of character*, for some never do God's will, though they wish they did, and they regret, they say, that they cannot: they resolve that they will, and there it ends. O you spongy souls! Some of you are sadly squeezable. Whatever hand grips you can shape you. Decision is needed, for you cannot do God's will unless you know how to say, "No," and to put your foot down, and declare that whatever may happen you will not turn aside from the service of your God.

If the Lord shall teach you to do his will, you will also need *courage*. The prayer virtually says, "When my enemies ridicule me, teach me to

do thy will. When they threaten me, teach me to do thy will. When they tempt me, teach me to do thy will. When they slander me, teach me to do thy will, to be brave with the bravery which resolves to do the right, and leaves the issues with God."

"Teach me to do thy will." It means—Give me *resignation*, kill in me my self-hood, put down, I pray thee, my pride, make me willing to be anything or to do anything thou wilt.

It is a prayer that necessitates *humility*. No man can pray it unless he is willing to stoop and wash the saints' feet. "Teach me to do thy will." Let me be a scullion in thy kitchen if so I may glorify thee. I have no choice but that thou be all in all.

It is a prayer, too, *for spiritual life*, and much of it, for a dead man cannot do God's will. Shall the dead praise him? Shall they that go down to the pit give him thanks? Oh, no, brothers and sisters; you must be full of life if you are to do God's will. Some professors are not quickened one-third of the way up yet. I hope they have a measure of quickening, but it does not seem to have reached the extremities. There may be a little quickening in the heart, but it has not quickened the tongue to confess Christ, nor quickened the hand to give to Christ, or to work for Christ. They seem to be half-dead. O Lord, fill me with life from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head, for how can I do thy will unless thy Spirit saturates me through and through, till every pulse is consecrated? I would be wholly thine. "Teach me to do thy will."

II. I will not detain you many minutes over the second part of our sermon, in which we are to say a little upon ITS ANSWER. There is the prayer, "Teach me to do thy will." Will it get an answer? Yes, brethren, it will assuredly obtain an answer of peace.

For, first, *there is a reason for expecting it.* "Thou art my God." Oh, yes, if we were asking this of some one else we might fear, but "thou art my God" is blessed argument, because the greater supposes the less. If God has given us himself, he will give us teaching. It is also God's way to teach:—"Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach transgressors in the way." It is a quality of a good man to wish to make others good; it is supremely the quality of the good God to make others good. When I think of what the Lord is, I am certain that he will be willing to teach me to do his will. Moreover, he has promised to do it. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye." And, again, he is glorified by so doing, for it brings glory to God when his people do his will; therefore may I expect for all these reasons that he will teach me to do his will.

Again, dear friends, *it needs to be answered.* "Teach *me* to do thy will. Lord, there is nobody who can ever teach *me* thy will except thou do it. I shall never learn it of myself. This scholarship I shall never pick up by chance. Lord, unless thou hold me fast, and teach me with thy supremest art, I shall never learn to do thy will as I desire to learn it." You see, he turns away from every other teacher to his God, he puts himself to school to God alone. And there is the prayer, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God." Brother, you must have this teaching, or else you will never do God's will. No strength of nature, no wit of

nature, can ever suffice to serve the Lord aright; you must be taught from above.

There are many ways in which God gives his answer to this prayer—"Teach me to do thy will." We have received one wonderful answer to it already. He has given *Jesus Christ to be our Example.* There is no teaching like actual example. If you want to know the will of God study the life of Christ.

The Lord is pleased to give us fainter copies of that same will of his in his saints. Read the sacred biographies of the Scriptures. Watch the *holy lives* of those who are among you, who live near to God, and follow them so far as they follow Christ. They are not complete copies; there are blots and blunders: still, the Lord does teach young people by the godly lives of their parents, and he instructs all of us by the biographies of devoted men and women.

Again, the Lord teaches us by every line of *his word,* and oftentimes when that word is heard, or carefully read, it comes home with great power to the soul, and guides us in the way of life.

Moreover the Lord has a way of teaching us by *his own Spirit.* The Holy Spirit speaks in secret whispers to those who are able to hear him. It is not every professing Christian that has the visitations of the Spirit of God in personal monitions, but there are saints who hear a voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." God guides us with his eye as well as by his word. Opened eyes can see in a moment what the Lord means. He has *gentle* means. His daily dealings in loving tenderness are guides to us. Every mercy is a star to pilot us to heaven. When we are not willing to be guided so easily, he will teach us by *rough means.* The Lord has a bit and a whip for those who need them. He will restrain us by affliction and infirmity, and sometimes chasten us very sore with losses, bereavements, depression of spirit, and the like: but in some way or other he will hear the prayer for teaching, for it is a covenant promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Blessed are they to whom the teaching comes sweetly and softly. It can be so if we are willing to have it so; but surely if we will not be tenderly guided, God will make us to do his will as men compel the bullock to do their will when it is rebellious under the yoke, and must be broken in. The Lord will hear our prayer for instruction; but it may not be quite in the way we should have chosen.

One thing more. I trust we have, all of us who know the Lord, prayed the prayer, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God." Now mind, my dear friend, mind that you do it sincerely, and know what you are at, because after offering such a petition as this, you dare not go into sin. You cannot say, "Teach me to do thy will," and then go off to frivolous amusements, or spend your evenings in vain and giddy society, because that would be an insolent mockery of God. "Teach me to do thy will," you say, and then get up and do what you know to be clean contrary to his mind and will: what defiant profanity is this!

Again, do not offer this prayer with a reserve. Do not say, or mean, "Teach me to do thy will in all points but one. That is a point in which I pray thee have me excused." I am afraid that certain believers do not want to learn too much. I have known them not like to read special passages of Scripture. Perhaps they trouble them doctrinally, or

as to the ordinances of the Christian faith, or as to matters of church discipline; if they do not paste those pages together to hide the obnoxious passage yet they do not like them opened too much. They would rather read a verse which looks more to their mind. But, brother, if thou and a text have a quarrel, make it up directly. Thou must not alter the text; alter thy creed, alter thy life, alter thy thought, God the Holy Spirit helping thee; for the text is right, and thou art in the wrong. "Teach me to do thy will," means, if we pray it honestly, "I will search God's book to know what his mind is." Why, there are numbers of you who join with the church you were brought up to, whatever it is. You do not take the trouble to examine as to whether your church is Scriptural or not. This is a blind way of acting. This is not obeying the will of God. Know what God's book teaches. Search the Scriptures. Many Christians believe what their minister preaches because *he* preaches it. Do not believe a word of what I preach unless you can find it in the Word of God. "To the law and to the testimony. If we speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in us." We are all fallible, and though we teach as best we can, and hope that God teaches you much by us, yet we are not inspired, and do not pretend to be. Search you the book of God on your own account, and abide by what you find there, and by nothing else. Where the Bible leads you are bound to follow, and following its guidance you shall not walk in darkness. Seek to know the will of God; and when you know it, carry it out, and pray the Holy Ghost to take away the dearest idol you have known—the thought that pleases you best—out of your mind, if it is contrary to the supreme will of the eternal God. The Lord grant we may thus pray, and thus be heard.

Alas, unconverted people cannot pray after the fashion of my text. They have, first of all, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before they can do the will of the Lord. May you all be led to believe in the Saviour, and when you have so done then may the Holy Ghost lead you to pray, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God."

The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms cxlii. and cxliii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—119 (Part I.), 708, 143.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—I had joyfully expected to set out for home next Monday, but flights of letters have come to warn me against returning while an Arctic temperature freezes our native land. Many matters make me anxious to see my dear home and church, but I submit to the loving advice of my deacons, which has just reached me by telegram; and I shall abide in this warm retreat for another week, hoping for a change of weather.

Yours heartily,

Mentone, January 31, 1880. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRESSING QUESTIONS OF AN AWAKENED MIND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who art thou, Lord? . . . . What wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts ix. 5, 6.

PAUL fell to the ground overcome by the brightness of the light which outshone the mid-day sun, and as he lay there he cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" After receiving an answer to his first question, he humbly asked another, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

This morning I spent all my strength, and I scarcely have any remaining for this evening, but the subject was well worthy of the greatest exhaustion.* I tried to show that we must receive the kingdom of heaven as little children, or else we could not in any wise enter into it. I wanted, if I could, to add a sort of practical tail-piece to that subject, something that would enable me, yet more fully, to explain the childlike spirit which comes at conversion, and which is absolutely needful as one of the first marks and consequences of the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart. I cannot find a better illustration of the childlike spirit than this which is now before us.

Paul was a great man, and on the way to Damascus I have no doubt he rode a very high horse. He verily thought that he was doing God service. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and had a very high estimate of his own character; and now that he had letters from the high priest upon his person, he felt himself to be armed with great power, and to be no mean man. He would let those poor Christians in Damascus know! He would worry them out of their fanaticism. He would take care to let them see that Saul of Tarsus was greater than Jesus of Nazareth. But a few seconds sufficed for the Lord to alter the man. How soon he brought him down! The manifestation of Jesus Christ himself from heaven soon subdued the great man into a little child, for the two questions which are now before us are exceedingly childlike. He enquires, with sacred curiosity, "Who art thou, Lord?" and then he surrenders at discretion, crying, "What wilt thou have me to do?" He seems to cry, "I give up my weapons. I submit

* "Receiving the kingdom of God as a little child." No. 1,439.

to be thy servant. I only ask to be taught what I am to do, and I am ready to do it. Thou hast conquered me. Behold, at thy feet I lie; only raise me up and give me something to do in thy service, for I will gladly undertake it." To this spirit we must all come if we are to be saved. We must come to think of Jesus so as to desire to know him; and then we must reverence Jesus so as to be willing to obey his will in all things. Upon those two points I am going to speak with a measure of brevity to-night.

Our first object of thought will be—*the earnest enquirer seeking to know his Lord;* and the second will be *the obedient disciple requesting directions.*

I. First, then, if any one of us would be saved he must be brought by divine grace to be AN EARNEST ENQUIRER AFTER THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. He must ask the question, "Who art thou, Lord?"

Notice that *he is willing to be taught.* He lies there with the Christ above him, and he asks him a question. He is not only willing to learn, but he is eager to be taught. "Who art thou, Lord?" is the utterance of his inmost soul. He wants to know. And dost not thou want to know, my hearer? There is but one name given under heaven whereby thou must be saved. Dost thou not wish to know something about him whose name it is? Art thou indifferent to thy soul's affairs, careless about what shall become of thy immortal soul? Did Jesus die, and is it nothing to thee? Dost thou pass by his cross as though it were the market cross of a village? Dost thou hear of his death as though it were some common-place event in history to be once read and then forgotten? I pray it may not be so with thee. But since thou must either be lost or saved eternally, come thou and ask with deep anxiety, "Who art thou, Lord? Who art thou by whom I am to be saved? What right, what power hast thou to save? What claim hast thou upon my faith? Oh, tell me, for I long to know." Want of thought ruins half mankind. If men were but anxious to understand the truth they would soon learn it and receive it. If like the Bereans they would search the Scriptures to find the truth, or if like Lydia their hearts were opened to receive it, they would soon know the Lord. Like Paul, we must be willing to learn.

And, next, observe *the subject that he wished to be instructed upon.* "Who art thou, Lord?" You have heard that Christ is the Saviour, let your ambition be to know all about *him.* I will tell you one thing: saints on earth, and even saints in heaven, are always wanting to have this question more fully answered to them,—"Who art thou, Lord?" Those who know him best will tell you that there is a something about him which still surpasses all their knowledge; and I suppose that even when we see him face to face there will remain a mystery in his matchless love, and a depth unsearchable in his divine person, into which even then we shall not be able to dive. "Who art thou, Lord?" may well be the question of a soul that is seeking salvation, since it is still the question of those who have found it.

"Who art thou, Lord?" What is thy person? What is thy nature? How is it that thou art able to save? Learn well that he is divine, yet human; the Son of Mary, and yet the Son of God. He is man, thy brother, touched with the feeling of thy infirmities, yet is he God eternal,

infinite, full of all power and majesty, assuredly divine. Learn thou this if thou wouldst be saved, and regard the Lord Jesus as God over all, blessed for ever, yet clothed in the form of a servant, and made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Learn that.

"Who art thou, Lord?" What are thy offices? If my eye could see thee I would ask thee, What titles dost thou bear? What offices dost thou sustain? He is a prophet; thou must be instructed by him, and believe his teaching. He is a priest; thou must be washed by his blood, and he must offer sacrifice for thee; nay, rather, he has offered it, and thou must accept it as being for thee and on thy behalf. He is a King, too, and if thou wilt be saved by him thou must let him govern thee. Thou must yield thyself to him and be his subject, and take up his cross and bear his easy yoke, which is no burden to the neck. Prophet, priest, king, and a thousand other offices does he sustain. Ask, thou craving sinner, ask, "Who art thou, Lord?" till thou shalt discover something about him that exactly suits thee, and then thy faith shall light upon it and thy heart shall cry, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire."

"Who art thou, Lord?" It is a question you may ask about *his relationships*. Who is he? The Son of the Highest, and yet the brother of the lowest. Who is he? King of angels and King of kings, and yet the friend of sinners and the helper of the humblest that will come to him. He stands as the head over all things to the church: his church's husband and the world's ruler, master of providence, sovereign of heaven, conqueror of hell itself. All power is in his hands. The Father has committed it unto him, and now he stands in such relationship to us that if we believe in him he gives us eternal life, and guards us from all ill, for he has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." O beloved hearer, if thou wouldest be saved, study deeply that question, "Who art thou, Lord?" and be not satisfied till thou knowest Christ and art known of him—till there is a mutual knowledge between thee and himself, for it is only so that thou canst be saved. An unknown Christ is no Christ to you. A Saviour whom you do not know is a Saviour who will not know you in the day of his appearing.

"Who art thou, Lord?" Now, that question, as I have said, concerning Christ should be asked by us all, but it is not at all a speculative question. It is a question of the utmost practical importance to every man, and in proportion as a man knows the answer to that question he will receive its practical result. Hearken and perceive this. "Who art thou, Lord?" What will be the first result of having this question answered?

Why, when Paul knew that he whose face had shone upon him brighter than the sun was Jesus of Nazareth, he was seized with the deepest possible *contrition*. "What!" he seemed to say, "have I persecuted the Lord? When I was hunting down those poor people was I hunting down the Messiah? Was I fighting against the Christ of God?" He had not known that before, but when he knew who the Lord was then his heart was broken within him with a deep sense of sin. Now, come ye hither, some of you; you have been living for years refusing true religion, and despising it, but have you ever thought that you

were refusing Jesus Christ the Son of God, and despising the Beloved of God who condescended to come into the world to suffer for love's sake? When they put Jesus to death he was, as our sweet poet puts it—

"Found guilty of excess of love."

It was all that could be laid to his dear charge; but for excess of love he died. And thou hast refused him. Thou hast now these twenty years and more refused that thorn-crowned head, that brow so marred, those wounded hands, that gashed and wounded side! Thou hast refused the matchless Saviour, without whom thou art undone for ever! Hast thou known this? Hast thou done it wilfully? I hope thou canst reply, "But I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Therefore he winks at your ill manners, and he bids you now come to him and he will gladly receive you. He will in no wise cast you out.

To know Christ, then, is a practical knowledge, because it leads to repentance. When Christ is unknown we can go on refusing and even persecuting him; but when we clearly perceive that it is the Son of God and the bleeding Lamb whom we have refused and persecuted, then our hearts melt; we beg his forgiveness, and cast ourselves at his feet.

A second practical result is that then our *hope* is encouraged; for though Paul at the sight of the Lord Jesus must have been full of bitter anguish, it was by that same sight that he was afterwards cheered and comforted. What! Art thou in heaven brighter than the sun? Art thou the man of Nazareth whom I have persecuted? Art thou he who was rejected and despised? O thou bright and shining one, art thou that same Christ to whom the publicans and harlots drew near? Art thou he who came to seek and to save that which was lost? Art thou exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins? Then is there hope for me. It is the sinner's Christ that is in heaven, the same that took the little children and said, "Suffer them to come to me." Oh, then, I will trust him. I feel I may, I can, I must. I yield myself to him because I know him now. I did not before. How practical is this knowledge!

And it had another effect upon Paul. It led him to *complete submission.* He said, "Is this Christ whom I have rejected Lord of all? Then it is indeed hard for me to kick against the pricks. I will not do so any longer. Resist him? That I dare not do! If all power be in his hands, then to oppose him is as hopeless as it is wicked. Behold, I surrender at discretion. O Lord Jesus, be my king. Accept me as thy subject. I oppose thee no longer." How I wish that Jesus would make some here know him who have never known him before—that they may at this very hour yield to him; because if once they knew him it would fire them with *ardour in his service.* There was never a man yet that did really know Christ whom Christ did not fill with an inward flame, so that he felt he could live or die for him. Some human leaders have had such extraordinary influence over their soldiery that they have commanded and have been cheerfully obeyed, even at the cost of life. The Christ of God has a superlative power over all hearts that know him. See how Paul felt his influence, and scoured the world to win Christ's lost ones. Perils of robbers; perils of rivers, the deep sea itself, scourging, stoning; all these were nothing to the apostle

from the day when he knew Christ. He had been exceedingly hot against him, but now he burns and blazes with zeal for him. And so will it be with all who know Jesus. Right practical, then, is the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" Oh that the Spirit of God would lead every one to ask that question for himself.

Only once more and I leave the question. It is this. While Paul was willing to learn, and his subject was important, for he wished to learn of Christ, and exceedingly practical, for it moved him to every good thing, it is worthy of remark that *he sought instruction from the best possible Master;* for, my brethren, who can tell us who Christ is but Christ himself? Here is his book. Read it. It is the looking-glass. Jesus is yonder, and he looks into this book, and if you look into it with well-washed eyes, you may see his reflected image in this glass; darkly, however, at the best. So, too, when you hear his faithful servants preach you may see somewhat of Christ; but let me tell you there is no sight of Christ like that which comes personally to your own soul by the Holy Spirit. I do not mean that any men among us will ever see Christ while we are here with these eyes; and if we did, it might not do us good, for thousands saw him who, nevertheless, cried "Crucify him." But I do mean that there are eyes inside these eyes, eyes of the mind and of the soul, to which Christ himself must reveal himself; and I charge you who have never seen him so to fall on your knees and cry, "Show thyself to me." You must have personal dealings with him, each one for himself, and you may have these dealings. He is accessible to-night. He will receive you at once if you seek him. He has declared that he will not cast any out that come to him. Oh, will you not ask him to show himself to you? If you knew he would refuse you, you might be excused the prayer; but since he will manifest himself to every contrite, lowly, seeking soul, will you not seek him? Will you not even now humbly put to him this question, "Who art thou, Lord?" Reveal thyself to me, as thou dost not to the world, but as thou dost reveal thyself to seeking souls.

So then I leave that question to come to the second one. May the Holy Spirit help us while we handle it.

II. "What wilt thou have me to do?" THE OBEDIENT DISCIPLE REQUESTING DIRECTION.

We are always telling you that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. That is the basis-doctrine of the gospel; but recollect that we never told you that you might believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then live as you liked. That be far from us. He who truly believes in Christ does as Christ bids him, and becomes henceforth Christ's servant and disciple as well as his saved one. Hence the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

You will notice that the apostle here puts himself into the position of a soldier waiting for orders. He will not stir till he has received his officer's command. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He stands quite ready to do it; but he wants to know what the order may be, and therefore he looks up, and prays, "Lord, direct me. What wouldst thou have me to do?" It is the Lord's will alone that he now means to do. "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" Before it used to be, "What will Moses have me to do?" And with some now present it has been

"What should I like to do?" for whatsoever their soul lusteth after they have done, and whatsoever new pleasure, no matter how sinful it might be, if it were within their reach, they followed greedily after. He that would be saved must yield up his own will to his Lord. Brethren, take heed unto yourselves that Christ be your Master, and your only Master. It would never do to say, "What would the church have me to do?" As far as the church teaches what Christ taught, obey her, but no further. It would not even be right to say, "What would such a one have me to do?" Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But if Paul does not follow Christ, we must not follow Paul. He says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed;" and so let it stand. I count it a sad lowering of a Christian's standard when he takes any sainted man living, or even any man now in heaven, to be his guide and master. "One is your Master, even Christ;" and your question should be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I see what I am bidden to do in the Prayer Book. I see what I am bidden to do by learned and godly men, but these things have no authority over my conscience. Lord, what wouldst *thou* have me to do? If it be not in thy Word and thy word I know there can be no light in it, but what I know not, teach thou me."

And, then, see that this childlike obedience of the apostle is *personal*. It says, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do? I have little enough to do with my neighbours. They have their duty and their calling. No, Lord, what wouldst thou have *me* to do? Other persons must review the light they have; but, Lord, what wilt thou *me* to do? My master, my brother, my friend, I have no right to judge these: to their own Master they must stand or fall; but, Lord, what wouldst thou have *me* to do?" You that look at your own inability when you come to Christ, must come to him with a personal faith, pleading for strength to do his will. You must yield to Jesus a personal obedience, even should it separate you from all your family. Let it separate the nearest kin, let it cause your past friends to give you the cold shoulder, let it subject you to persecution even unto death; you have nothing to do with those consequences, your business is to say, "Show me what thou wouldst have me to do, and I will do it." I mention a little incident in my own personal history, for which I have always had reason enough to thank God. When I was converted to God after some long time of bitter anguish of spirit I found rest; and the very first thing I did when I found rest in Christ was to read for myself the New Testament, and see what the Lord would have me to do. I found in the word of God the duty of believers' baptism. I had never met with any Baptist friends in my life until I had for myself discovered the truth. I had not even heard of their existence, so negligent had they been in the spreading of their views on that matter; but taking up the New Testament with my lexicon to see what the word meant, I found that the word baptize signified to immerse. When I read the Scriptures I found everywhere that believers were immersed. I did not at first know of the existence of another person who held that opinion, but it did not signify to me the turn of a hair. I was only afraid that I might not find anybody to baptize me, but I meant to attend to the duty in

some way or other. I discovered afterwards that there were many who had searched the Scriptures and had come to the same conclusion as myself; but to me, then, it did seem like coming away from all the Christian people that I knew. Have I ever regretted the step? No. Unimportant as some might think it, it gave to my whole spirit and life a tone for which I have reason to thank God. I stood upon my own feet, having read the Bible for myself. I took my own way in obedience to my Lord and Master, and from that day I know not that I have wilfully turned aside from his statutes, either in doctrines or in precept, but I have taught the faith as I have learned it. When I go to my chamber at night with a thousand imperfections to confess, yet I can feel that I have honestly and faithfully followed my Master. If I have erred it has been from want of light, and not from want of will to serve him; but if I had burked that first conviction, and if I had made little nicks in my conscience at first, could I stand before you all this night and declare that I have not shunned both to do and to declare the whole counsel of God? I charge every young man as soon as he believes in Christ to read and search the Bible for himself, and say, "Show me what thou wouldest have me to do." I would rather be right alone than be wrong with all the world: and every honest Christian man ought to feel that he would rather follow Jesus Christ with two or three than run with a multitude after the traditions of men. God help you, beloved, as soon as you are converted to become thoroughly obedient disciples, searching the Word. I do not set so much importance upon the result of your investigation as I do upon the investigation itself. I care less about the result you arrive at than I do for the spirit which would lead you, as a disciple, earnestly to desire to follow your Master, and would lead you to do everything that you believe to be his will—the little as well as the great. The Lord help us to be anxious to know and do his will in all things, fearless of consequences.

Note again, that the apostle not only puts it personally, but he pleads for grace *at once*. "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do?" as much as to say, "I will do it directly." He does not ask to be allowed a little delay, but "What wouldst thou have me to do? Here I thy willing servant stand." Young man, if you would have salvation you must be ready to follow Christ to-night. To-night, it may be, is the time when the Spirit of God is struggling with you, and if resisted he never may return. Just now the scales hang in an even balance. Which way shall they turn? It may be to-night for death or life the scale shall turn for the last time. O blessed Jesus in heaven, why should we hesitate if thou wilt indeed save us? We may well make a complete surrender and say, "Now, even now, I enlist beneath thy banner, for I thy willing servant am."

And observe, once more, that *he does not make any kind of conditions*. What wouldst thou have me to do? I will do it. If unpleasant to the flesh it shall be pleasant to my heart: and if it appear stern, yet if thou wilt help me I will do it, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Saul little knew when he asked the question what the doing of his Master's will would involve, but he meant at the time that whatever it would involve he was prepared for it. O you that would be Christians, do not suppose that it is just believing something—an article of a creed, or

undergoing a ceremony—that will save you; you must, if you are Christ's, yield yourselves up to him. He did not come into this world to lead men to heaven by back roads and crooked paths, but he leads them into the way of righteousness, the end whereof is everlasting peace. Will you be child enough to follow him? Will you have the childlike spirit which only wants first to know who he is and then exclaims—

"Through floods or flames if Jesus lead
I'll follow where he goes."

The Lord grant it may be so with us!

I close with just this remark, that it is by knowing Christ that you will learn to obey him, and the more you obey him the more easy it will be: and in obeying him you will find your honour. Paul at this day stands in a most honourable place in the church of God, simply because being called of God to do his will he did it faithfully even to the end. Is it not beautiful to see how Paul in one moment seems to have forgotten all his old Pharisaism? All the hard words and bitter blasphemies that he had spoken against Christ, they have all gone in a moment. What strange changes will come over some beings in an instant. One of my students who has been a sailor has preached the gospel for some long time, but his English was far from grammatical. Having been in college some little time he began to speak correctly, but suddenly the old habit returned upon him. He was in the *Princess Alice* at the time of the lamentable catastrophe, and he escaped in an almost miraculous manner. I saw him some time after, and congratulated him on his escape, and he replied that he had saved his life but had lost all his grammar. He found himself for awhile using the language of two or three years ago: and even now, though he is recovering his spirits,* he declares that he cannot get back what he had learnt. He seems to have drowned his grammar on that terrible occasion. Now, just as we may lose some good thing by a dreadful accident, or occurrence, which seems to sweep over the mind like a huge wave and wash away our treasures, so by a blessed catastrophe, if Christ should meet with any man to-night, much which he has valued will be swept away! You may write on wax, and may make the record fair. Take a hot iron and roll it across the wax, and it is all gone. That seems to me to be just what Jesus did with Paul's heart. It was all written over with blasphemy and rebellion, and he rolled the hot iron of burning love over his soul and the evil inscription was all gone. He ceased to blaspheme, and he began to praise. May the like be done to many here present to the praise and glory of my Master's love and power. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—505, 589, ("Flowers and Fruits" 109).

---

* October 20, 1878.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PLAIN ANSWER TO AN IMPORTANT ENQUIRY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—John vi. 29.

NOTICE the connection, or you will miss the meaning of the words; for at first sight it looks as if our Saviour taught us that it is the work of God for us to believe on him. Now, that would be quite true; and it is very plainly taught in other parts of Scripture that faith is the work of God; but that is not the teaching in this particular instance, as will be very plain if you look at the context. First, our Saviour said to the people, "See how you labour after the bread of your bodies. You have been running all round the coast to find me in order that I might feed you again with loaves and fishes. Now," says he, "let your labour run after something better. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to life eternal." He gently rebukes them: "Do not spend all your strength in seeking after temporal good, but think about your immortal natures. Satisfy the hunger of your spirits, the better part of you." They immediately answered, "You tell us to labour after the bread that does not perish. What shall we do that we might work the work of God and so obtain it?" Our translation fails to let us see that they used precisely the same word as the Saviour had done. He said "labour," and they said, "What shall we do that we may labour this labour of God? What is it?" They took him at his word, and they put a question in accordance therewith.

When men begin to be aroused about spiritual things, they naturally cry, "What must we do to be saved? What must we do that we may work the work of God?" It is a faulty question, it is a question very much shaped by their ignorance and error. They suppose that there are works to be done, and merit to be earned, by doing and obeying a law, and so they put it in that shape—"What shall we do? What shall we work that we may work the work of God?" The Saviour did not chide them for the shape of the question. It was not the time to expect accuracy, but he gave them such truth as they could understand, and he replied, "You want to know what work you must do that shall be 'the work of God,' or a work pleasing to God. This then is 'the work of

God's the work most pleasing to God of all the works that can be done by men, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The teaching here is not that faith is wrought in us by God, which I have already said is a great truth, but it is this—that if men desire to work, the first and chief of all work is that they believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. Does any man object to faith being called the work of man? If he does, I ask him wherefore he objects. It is true that faith is the gift of God, but this does not militate for a moment with the other truth that faith is the work of man: for it is and must be the act of man. No one in his senses can deny that. Will you venture to say that man does not believe? Then I venture to tell you that he who does not personally believe in Jesus is a lost man; and if there be such a thing as a faith which is not a man's own act and deed it will not save him. The man must himself believe or perish: this is the plain doctrine of Scripture. Repentance is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, but we must ourselves repent, or we never shall be saved. Faith is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost does not believe, or repent: these are a man's own acts. With our hearts we believe unto righteousness. If we do not believe then we are not partakers of the promise which is given to those who do believe. Faith is, therefore, the work of man; and it is the chief of works, the work most pleasing to God, the most godlike work, or, as the text puts it, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

To open up this one thought I pray for help from on high: it is just this, that *faith is the most pleasing of all the works that man can do.* It is here called "the work," but not strictly and properly, for it can never be ranged with the works of the law, from which it essentially differs; but the Saviour took up the word which they used, and spoke to their ignorance that he might instruct them.

I. Regarding it as a work, faith is most pleasing to God; for, first, IT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY OF ALL TRUE WORK. *There lies within the loins of faith every possible form of holiness.* As a forest may lie asleep within an acorn, so within the bounds of faith, little though it be, every virtue lies hidden. It may be microscopic in form, but it is certainly there, and only needs development. Repentance dwells in faith, for he that believes in Jesus Christ unto salvation knows that he is a sinner, and he must have some hatred of sin, or else he would not have taken Christ to deliver him from his sin. Love to God is there, for, most assuredly, when I trust a man—completely trust him—it would be impossible for me to do so unless I felt some leaning of my spirit towards him; and the complete trusting of the soul to Christ, which is faith, has had in it no small measure of love to Christ. If I had before me a list of all the graces of the Spirit of God, and I were to take them up one by one, and then analyze faith, I should find some measure of all these good works of the Spirit hidden away in the simple act of believing in Jesus Christ.

I know what some of you have said—"Is that all that I am to do in order to be saved? Am I simply and alone to believe in Christ, that is, trust myself with him?" Yes, that is all, and it is so small an act that the most uneducated heart can perform it, but yet within it there are inconceivable mysteries of goodness. Just as sometimes inside a

walnut shell I have seen packed away with careful art all sorts of gems and jewels, "with my lady's gloves to wear," so within this little walnut shell of "believe and live" there will be found by any careful eye all the graces of the Spirit of God.

What is more, *all the graces come out of faith in due time*, for faith sums up the whole of a Christian's life. Now, my brethren, I challenge you to read the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, and see if you can think of anything noble, brave, glorious, which has not its counterpart in that chapter. But recollect, it is a description of the heroism—not of this virtue or of that, but of faith. In the long list, beginning with Abel and going down to the last, faith wrought all. From faith comes the power that stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of flames; out of weakness becomes strong. It is faith that tramples on temptation, it is faith that overcomes the world. It is faith that attains to holiness. Within the compass of that little babe whom you hold in your hand, a slender weight that you can scarcely feel, there are all the elements of yonder man of six feet, who leads the van in the royal host, and so the true Christian man in the perfection of the stature of Christ is all within the babe in grace who cries, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

I can well understand why our Saviour should say, "If you wish to work the work of God, you must believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent"; for in that act lie all the virtues, and out of that act will grow all the virtues in due time.

II. But now, secondly, this simple matter of trusting Jesus Christ, which is called FAITH, IS, IN ITSELF, MOST PLEASING TO GOD.

First, *it is the creature acknowledging its God.* While a man says, "I do not care about my soul," he lives in atheism, disowning God, living as if there were no God. When a man says, "I need no saving," that is contradicting God's testimony, wherein he declares that we are all gone out of the way and have altogether become abominable. When a man says, "I may be wrong, but I can get right of myself. My own good deeds will save me"; he is setting himself up in independence of his God; in fact, making himself his own God, and so, practically, setting up another God. But when the man cries, "I have sinned," there is an acknowledgment that the law is good, and holy, and just. When he then adds, "I have so sinned that I deserve punishment, and I submit myself to it," there is a recognition of the court of heaven, and an admission of the righteousness of its sentences. The rebellious heart submits itself to the authority of God. When he further says, "But I have heard, great God, that thou hast given thy Son to bleed and die for sinners, and that he is able to save to the uttermost them that trust him, and I do trust him," the submission of the man to God is complete. Before, he said, "I do not believe it. It does not stand to reason," that is proud reason still a rebel. Or he said, "It may or may not be so, but I do not see the peculiar beauty of an atoning sacrifice." There again is the proud heart kicking against God. But the man comes into his right place when he believes. When he believes in Jesus Christ and accepts mercy through the great sacrifice, God is well pleased because his poor erring *creature has come into its right place*, and God sees in the act of faith the restitution of rectitude.

Again, God is pleased with faith because *it accepts God's way of*

reconciliation. God has given Christ that he might reconcile us to himself by him. When a man says, "I take Christ to be my Saviour," he accepts God's way of reconciliation, and then God must be reconciled, for he has promised so to be. As he longs to be reconciled, and willeth not that any should perish, but that they should come to repentance, so does he rejoice when they are willing to make peace with him in his own appointed way. It shows a deference to his wisdom, a confidence in his love, a yielding to his divine will, and that is what he seeks after. All this, I say, is included in faith, and makes it well pleasing to God.

Perhaps the most acceptable element in faith to the eye of God is the fact that *it puts honour upon Jesus Christ*, for he dearly loves his Son. We cannot tell how deep is the love of the Father towards his only begotten Son. That which dishonours Jesus must be very obnoxious to the Father, and your self-confidence, my friend, is a dishonour to the merit and salvation of Christ, and God abhors it; but when you fling that all away, and have no hope but in the great atonement which he has made, then, I say, because your faith honours Jesus, therefore God delights in it, and he will honour your faith. It is not possible that he should cast a soul away that clings to the great High Priest. Oh, if you look to Jesus, that eye of yours shall never lose its sight: if your heart clings to Jesus, that heart of yours shall never lose its life: if your soul joys in Jesus, that soul of yours shall never lose its joy.

The fact is, that faith *puts us into a right relationship with God;* for what is the right relationship of a creature to his God but that of *dependence?* Is it not most suitable that since God made us, and he has all power and all strength, we should depend upon him for our being, as well as for our well-being? See how he hangs the world upon nothing. This round globe never starts nor falters, but is steadily upheld in its mighty march by the unseen hand of God. Yonder stars, mighty worlds though they be, have no power to keep themselves in their places; but the power of God establishes them. All things hang upon him, and the only position for a created being is that of entire dependence; what is that but faith? I believe that there is faith in heaven. Do not tell me there is no faith there. I believe it to be the essence of heaven that the glorified exercise unquestioning faith, and never feel a doubt. It will be the joy of every spirit before the throne to depend every moment for its immortality and bliss upon God, and to be quite confident that he will never fail it. Some sorts of faith will be turned to sight; but if faith be confidence in God, I bless God I shall have a great deal more of it in heaven than I can have here. A perfect child must have a perfect faith in a perfect father. Because faith brings the creature back to conscious dependence, therefore God is well pleased with it.

Faith restores us by putting us into a place of *childlike rest.* If a son has fallen into the hands of a malicious individual, who has whispered into his ear that his father hates him—that he is doing all he possibly can to ruin him—at first the youth will not believe the accusation, but perhaps after a while he begins to think it true. From that time forward every action that his father does will be interpreted the wrong way; and if there be anything in the father's life which is more kind than usual, it is highly probable that this poor misled boy will see a [redacted]er subtlety of malice in it than in his father's ordinary actions.

The lad will break his father's commands, and vex and anger his father. What is the first thing to be done to set that youth right? You may make him dread his father, and then he will behave properly in his outward actions, but he will only be waiting his time to break loose. Suppose it to be possible to make him believe in his father, and to be assured that his father loved him, and had all along been the kindest man on earth, he would run into his father's arms. He will be willing enough to obey a parent whom he trusts: it will be his delight to do so.

You have won his confidence, and everything is right now. This is what faith does to us. The devil and our own corrupt nature say, "God is unkind, for he has made an awful hell," and so on. Faith interposes and cries, "He has put away his wrath. He has made full atonement for sin. He is willing to receive us." Then faith says, "Trust him; trust him implicitly"; and when the soul has done that, then faith testifies "He has loved you with an everlasting love. Jesus died for you, and he has provided a heaven for you." Let this be known and felt, and what a change takes place! Oh, then, you hate your sin! Oh, then, you are ready to say, "How could I play the fool against one so kind, so good, so right?" Under this impulse you will serve him, and live for him. That simple matter of believing him has done it all. It is the hinge on which character turns. Hard thoughts of God lead to acts of rebellion, but a childlike confidence in infinite love softens the heart, and sanctifies it, and makes the man to be a true child towards the great Father. Do you wonder, then, that there is much in faith in itself which is pleasing to God? And if you ask what great works you are to do to please God, we shall not tell you to build a row of almshouses, or endow an orphanage, or give your body to be burned; believe in Jesus Christ, and you have done more than all these things put together.

III. And now a third reason why faith is so great a thing is this—that FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IS THE TEST OF WORKING FOR GOD, for all the works that ever were, without faith in Jesus Christ, are not works for God at all.

Let me explain and prove my point. Suppose that a person should say, "But I mean to live for the great God, and work for him." Without faith *the spirit of work is wrong*. My friend, suppose you said to me, "I will live for you and spend my life in your service, but I am not going to believe what you say"? There would be a point of disagreement between us, which would render it impossible for you to be of any service to me, or for anything that you did to be of any value to me. You call me a liar to begin with, and then say you serve me. Many of you that have heard the gospel may, perhaps, think that you are serving God, though you have never believed in Christ: but, I tell you, your best actions are nothing but whitewashed sins. All that you do must be destitute of real excellence, because you begin by making God a liar. It is a hard word, say you. I cannot help it; it is the word of John, the most gentle spirit amongst all biblical characters. John says, "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." If you begin by calling God a liar, I do not care much what you do after that. I would a great deal rather you should be moral than immoral, and sober than drunken; but,

after all, you will be lost in either case if you persevere in calling God a liar. All your holiness will be a sham if you will not believe in Jesus. The test of true work for God is this—"That ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

Without faith *the motive of work fails.* "But," cries another person, "I believe I have deserved well of God; I have kept myself pretty right, and I have performed many good deeds." What have you done them all for? "I have been working for my salvation," says one. In other words, you have been working for yourself. Pay yourself, then! Self is first, and last; your works are selfishness from top to bottom. You have been trying to be good to get to heaven by it. It is a mean, beggarly life that begins and ends with self! Your Maker, whom you were bound to love with all your heart, you have not loved at all, except that you have meanly pretended to love him, in order to save yourself. You had a kind of cupboard love to him, such as an ass or an ox might have to a corn-bin, or a stall, but no real affection. How can you perform a virtuous act, while self is your tyrant lord? When you have once believed in Jesus Christ then you are saved, and henceforth you live to glorify the name of the Lord: you live to work out that which he has worked in you, to will and to do of his own good pleasure, but till you are saved by faith self is necessarily your first thought. No man is capable of virtue as long as self is his object; and every man must make self his object till he is saved. When he is saved he rises into a nobler atmosphere altogether, and then his works are acceptable to God. Do you not see that at least you have to get out of self-righteousness, and to be saved by believing in Christ, before you can begin to do anything that will be really working for God? Up to that point it will be all working for yourself, and that is a poor, poor thing, which cannot please the most high God.

Beloved friends, living by faith in Jesus Christ is the evidence of your sincerity in any work that you do for God, for can there be any real working for God while your own pride is uppermost? God tells you that your best works are imperfect and will not save you, and he hangs his own dear Son upon the cross to save you because you are a sinner. You turn your back to the cross; you say "My own merits are good enough," and then you talk about serving God after that! Can he accept anything at your hands after you have rejected his Son and insulted himself? You have touched the Lord in the very tenderest point when you have taken your own detestable righteousness, which is just a heap of infected rags, a mass of abominable filth in the sight of God, and you have preferred it to the blood and righteousness of his only Son. After such an atrocious crime as this, how dare you talk about doing service to God? It is impossible, sir. There is a lie in the bottom of your heart. Get rid of it. How can you serve the Lord while your pride thus angers him? He tells you that you must bow before his Son and trust in him; but your reply is, "No, I must feel something or do something." That is as much as saying, "I will be saved in my own way." You talk about serving God after that naughty "I will" of yours has been defying him. Suppose that one of your family will not do what you tell him. He brazens you out. He says he will have his own way; and then he goes into the garden and he plucks you a flower, and he

expects that the gift will please you. What? Brought in a rebellious hand! While he is in a wilful state and boiling over with bad temper! Does he think to please you by such a trifle? You say, "No, my child, that cannot be. You must first bow before your father and acknowledge that you have done wrong." He may pout his lips, and say he will never obey you, and then ask to kiss you. Will he have his kiss? Assuredly not till first of all he will submit. That is just the condition of many a seeker after God. He has a wicked pride in his heart, and a rebellious will, and if he will believe in Jesus it will be a proof that his pride and rebellion are given up; but if he will not yield and trust neither can he expect that God will save him.

IV. I would say, in the fourth place, that faith in God is a most blessed and acceptable thing, because IT IS THE SEAL OF ALL OTHER BLESSINGS.

Notice that faith in God is the seal—first, of our *election*. Read the thirty-seventh verse, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Now, if you come to Christ, dear friend, you are one that his Father gave him. You are one of his elect. Oh, what a blessing this is. The doctrine of election is full of rich comfort to all who are interested in it, and election itself is the greatest of all favours. "But how am I to know that I am one of God's elect?" By this testimony, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Every elect soul that reaches adult age is brought to believe in Jesus Christ, and as sure as ever you are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, you may be absolutely certain that you are predestinated to eternal life.

In the next place, faith seals our *effectual calling*. If you look a little farther down you will see, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day." These are the express words of Christ, and they show that every man that comes to Christ must have been drawn by the Father; that is to say, that effectual calling has exerted its divine power upon him. No man need say, "Am I drawn of the Father?" after he is once sure that he has faith in Jesus Christ; for you never could have believed in Jesus Christ except this had been given you from heaven. The forty-fourth verse is as plain as possible, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." You have come to him, and therefore the Father must have drawn you.

The next thing that faith assures us of is *final perseverance*. Read the forty-seventh verse—"He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." You need not raise the question, "Have I received everlasting life?" Raise this question first: "Have I believed in Jesus Christ? If so, I have everlasting life." Not a life, mark you, that will last you up to the end of the quarter, when you take a new ticket—nor a life that will preserve you to old age, and then leave you to temptation and death. No, "he that believeth on him hath *everlasting* life," and it is not everlasting life if it does not last for ever. Herein he that believes has the guarantee of final perseverance. Did not Jesus say, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? Are we not told of him that believes in Christ that there shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"? Or, as Christ puts it in this very chapter, "he shall

81021

never hunger and he shall never thirst." He has drunk a draught of eternal life in Christ Jesus, and he shall never thirst again.

This is a great deal for faith to bring to us, but it is not all, for two or three times over we are told here that whosoever believeth in Christ shall be raised up again at the last day: so that faith secures *resurrection*. Read the thirty-ninth verse and then the forty-ninth verse: "This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." How do I know that I shall have a blessed resurrection? How can I be certain that though the worms devour this body, yet when Christ shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, in my flesh I shall see God? I may be quite sure of it, because I believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Beloved, faith is the seal at the bottom of the title deed, which secures all things for time and eternity to the man that hath it. If thou be a believer, all the wheels of providence revolve for thee. If thou be a believer, every angel spreads his wings for thee. If thou be a believer, life is thine, and the death which seems to close it is only the appointed janitor to open the door of another and a brighter chamber. If thou believest, God himself is thine, and Christ, his Son, is thine. If thou believest, heaven, with its eternity and infinity of joy, which thy eye hath not seen, nor thy heart conceived of, is thine; nothing shall be kept back from the man that believes his God, and trusts his Redeemer. Oh that the Lord would give faith to you all. "Alas," you say, "I do not feel right." Never mind your feelings, trust in Christ. "Oh, but I am such a sinner." "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "Alas, but I have tried before." Away with all your trials before. Have done with trying, and accept the finished work. Trust Jesus now. "Do you mean that if I now do trust myself with Christ, I shall be saved while sitting in the pew?" I mean even so. Be thou whosoever thou mayest be, this night look to Jesus and be saved.

If thou wilt have done with thyself, and will trust thy soul in the hand of Jesus, who has sworn to save those that rest themselves upon him, thou art saved. Oh, that those who have heard this gospel many times would now for the first time really understand it, and say, "Is this, after all, the greatest of all works—that I do believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief, and save me now." O God, help many to breathe the prayer of faith at this moment, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John vi. 25—65.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 551, 533.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

EXPECTED PROOF OF PROFESSED LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Shew ye the proof of your love."—2 Corinthians viii. 24.

In every believer's heart there is love to God. He cannot else be a child of God. In every Christian's soul there is love to Jesus Christ. How could he be a Christian otherwise? As a consequence of this, in every Christian's bosom there is a love to the brotherhood:—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." In every Christian's breast there is also a love to all mankind. He practises that second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The spirit of God has cast out the demon of selfishness; and in proportion as that is the case the man possesses the mind of Christ, which is love. As all the law is fulfilled in one word, which is "love," so the outcome of our holy faith is also contained in that one word, "love." Oh that we were saturated with it!

Where there is true love in the heart it becomes a working principle. It does not lie dormant, but it works—works abundantly. It is a vital principle, and where there is life there is movement, and a measure of activity. It is a principle that grows, and out of its growth there comes fruit. For these reasons, and in these ways, true believers give sure proofs of the love that is in their hearts.

I wish to speak to you, at this time, by answering four questions.

I. First, WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS LOVE that we should be so anxious to prove it? This Christian love must have some great worth about it, or else we should not be exhorted by the apostle once and again to prove that we have it.

First remember that true love to God and the saints in the Christian heart is *divine in its origin*. We should never have loved God if he had not first loved us: and unless his Holy Spirit had turned the stream of our affections in that direction, we should have run away from God and have hated God, but we should neither have loved him nor his people. It is the nature of the seed of the serpent to hate the seed of the woman, and as long as we were under condemnation and wrath, and in our natural estate, we were on the serpent's side, and we warred against that which is good. "The carnal mind is enmity

against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If, therefore, we have even a spark of love to God, God must have given it to us. It is, therefore, a precious thing because it is of God, and we ought to take heed that we assuredly possess it; and we also should endeavour so to live that others may be convinced that this divine principle rules our spirits.

As it is divine in its origin, so it is *surpassing in its energy*, for true love to God exceeds all other love. Does not Christ tell us that—that a man must love him better than father or mother, or the dearest relative he has, or else he does not love him at all? Christ will not be put off with the leavings of our hearts. He must have our whole heart. All human affections, which are natural and proper, are to be held in subservience to this grand and master passion which is to set our soul on a blaze—love to God in Christ Jesus. He loves not Christ at all who does not love him first and best. This affection, like Aaron's rod, must swallow up all others, and our whole heart must belong to the Lord our God.

We must take care that we give proof of an affection which is so surpassing in its energy, for surely if it has such force it must produce its own proof. If it were some minor passion—some little narrow jet of flame that might light up a corner of our being, we might not be so particular about it, but if it is to fire our entire manhood it must produce some effect, or else we may well question whether we possess it.

This love is absolutely *vital in its necessity*. If it can be proved that a man does not love God, love Christ, and love his people, then the life of God does not dwell in him. Life and love are two words singularly alike, and, when we get to the bottom and radical principle of the spiritual nature, we perceive that they are singularly bound up together, insomuch that "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." These are some of the apostle John's great little words, which, in their miniature form, contain whole worlds of meaning. Beloved, we must love God, or else we are not in Christ. Hence the importance that the proofs of our love should be very distinct and unmistakeable. We should make our calling and election sure; and those things never can be sure unless we have abundant proofs of our love. It is vital in its necessity.

However great that love becomes, and I have spoken of it as rising to a superlative degree, it is *warranted by the facts of the case*. Love to God—I will not spend a word in justifying it. Love to Christ—how can it be needful to commend it to you?

> "Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands our soul, our life, our all."

And it shall have it, too. Do you not say so, my brethren? Do you not yield to this soft yet mighty bond—soft as silk, yet strong as iron? It holds us fast; we cannot escape from it. Not love Christ? Not love his people? Not love the world of sinners lost? Oh! sirs, surely we were of all creatures the most brutish if we were to dispute the necessity of love. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Go and love Jesus Christ till men call you a fanatic.

Go and love him till you give all your goods to feed the poor. Go and love him till you lie in a prison till the moss grows on your eyelids. Go and love him till you burn to ashes at the stake, and you have not loved him one whit more than he deserves. O our best Beloved, thy deservings warrant us in permitting our zeal for thee to eat us up, and eaten up we would be for thy glory's sake!

This love to Christ has been in all ages very *eminent in its achievements*. Wherever love reigns in a Christian it makes him strong. Faith laughs at impossibilities, and cries, "It must be done"; but love performs the deed, for "faith worketh by love." Love is the right hand of faith. What have not men done out of love to Christ? Truly, the time would fail me to tell of its exploits. What you shall do, dear sister, if you become full of love to Jesus, will astonish you; and what you shall do, dear brother, if the love of Christ burns through your soul, will far exceed what you have dreamed of as yet. Oh! for more love. Let the martyrs tell you what poor suffering flesh and blood can do when love strengthens it. Let holy women that have debated and disputed, and bled and died for Christ, in all their timidity and weakness made brave as lions for Christ, tell what love has done. Let the walls of the Colosseum at Rome, let the arenas of hundreds of amphitheatres tell how bravely men have played the man: how bravely women have met death for Christ's sake. All that the Church wants is the Holy Ghost to baptize her into the love of Christ, and nothing will be impossible to her.

Thus have I tried to commend this love, and surely we ought to be able to prove that we have it. If we have any question as to whether we have it or not, let us find no rest day or night till the grand debate is ended. We must love Christ or perish. Oh! by the certainty that his saints shall see him face to face and be like him, let us rise to something nobler in the form of love to him than we have ever reached as yet.

This is the love which we are to give proof of.

II. Secondly, WHAT IS THIS PROOF? The text says, "Show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love." What proof shall we show?

There are so many forms of action which would prove love to Christ that I cannot possibly go through them all, especially as each person, I believe, will give a different proof of his love. There is (to use a difficult word) an idiosyncrasy about each believer. He is a man by himself, and his love, if it is genuine, will take a form peculiar to himself in the proof which it gives. Certain proofs look *towards God and the Lord Jesus*. If you love him, you will keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. If you love him, you will seek to honour him—to spread the savour of his glorious name. If you love God in Christ Jesus, you will be anxious to extend his rule over the hearts of men. If you love God, you will long for communion with him: you will not be satisfied to live for days without speaking with him. If you love him, you will grieve yourself when you grieve him; your heart will smite you when you have gone astray. If you love God, you will long to be like him; you will strive after holiness. If you love God, he will reign over you; Christ will be your King; your

mind will be under subjection to him; your thoughts will be guided by him; your opinions will be taken from his word; your whole life will be seasoned by his Spirit which dwelleth in you. Do you not see that there are hundreds of ways in which you can show proof of your love towards God? Oh, that we may not be found wanting in any of these things!

We may show this love, in the next place, *towards God's ministers.* I cannot help mentioning them because the apostle so distinctly in this chapter speaks of himself and his brethren. And one special way of showing it is this:—if they speak well of you, do not let them have cause to retract their holy boasting, and to say with tears "I was deceived in these people." If any have brought you to Christ, be an honour to them and to the gospel that they preach, because, dear friends, the world turns round, and however retired a minister may be, yet worldlings are sure to throw the inconsistencies of his people in his teeth. They say "That is one of So-and-so's people: see how he acts;" and our ministry is hindered and our hearts are grieved whenever those who profess to have been brought to Christ walk unworthily. Show us a proof of the love you often express to us as your servants in Christ Jesus, by endeavouring so to walk that when we give in our account we may do it with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you.

Next, show proofs of your love *in reference to God's people.* How can that be done? Some of you need to have this thing gone over with you because you have evidently forgotten it. If you are God's servants you love his people, and the first proof you should give is to go and join with them. Say, "Where the list of their names is kept I will count it an honour to have my name enrolled." Certain of you say, "I should count it an honour, but I have hardly the courage to come forward." What! have I been sitting these various days to see the timid ones, and have you not all come yet? We will have another time for you, then, and try if we cannot get you right, for really we are not so frightful as you think we are, and you need not be timid about telling to a poor servant of Jesus Christ that you really love the name of his Master. He will be glad, and so will you be. Nay, but you say you are half afraid of yourself. I wish you were altogether afraid of yourself. The more afraid of yourself the better, for you are good for nothing in yourself. But do not be afraid of trusting yourself with Jesus, and when you have so done then the very next thing is to become identified with the visible church of Christ. If you say, "I love the brethren," the brethren may turn round and say, "Give us a proof of your love. Cast in your lot with us." Do as she did who, though she had been a heathen, nevertheless clung to one who worshipped the true God, and said, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

But when you have joined the church, then surely you should show a proof of your love by a hearty fellowship with the saints. We do not want you to put your name in the book and to be a professor, and then to sit in one of those pews up in the corner and come in and go out and never speak to anybody. I meet even now with some who say, "I have been for months at the Tabernacle, and nobody ever spoke

to me." Well, I know that there are so many earnest Christians on the watch here to speak with strangers that if you have not been spoken to it must be your own fault. Perhaps you are some dreadfully stiff body, and you have frightened them. I do not know, but it may be so. There are some who look as if they said, "Do not come near me. I do not want any questions asked me." We have some brethren and sisters who will break through your stiffness though, I dare say; but if it really is so I am very sorry for it, and it need not be so any longer. Speak to somebody at this very service. I do not dislike to hear a low hum of godly conversation before service begins, though some people think it horrible; neither do I deprecate a little lingering upon the steps and around the building; you are holding fellowship one with another, and I like that it should be so, for we do not meet too often. It is no desecration of the Sabbath or of the place of worship for Christian people to speak with one another to edification. When you join the church join it in earnest and converse much with the people of God, and by your hearty zeal show them a proof of your love.

And then unite with them in all their service. The school wants Sunday-school teachers. You love Christ, you say, and you love the young: show us a proof of your love. Come and help in that good work. There is something or other that you can do for Jesus, and for his church; do it, and thus show us a proof of your love.

Show the proof of your love by comforting the saints in affliction; by helping them as much as you can when they are in need; by defending their good name whenever you hear them railed at; by suffering nobody to speak against them falsely when you are by. Stand up for them.

Show them the proof of your love by bearing with their infirmities. The church is not perfect, and if it were it would not be perfect after you had joined it. You who have so many infirmities yourself should patiently bear with the infirmities of others. If the saints are not all you would like them to be, remember, nevertheless, that they are dear to the heart of Christ; and he, perhaps, sees in them beauties which you would see, too, if you had more beauties yourself. Perhaps your power to find fault arises from your having so many faults yourself; and if you were more sanctified, and more like Christ, you would fix your eye as well upon the beauties of their character as upon their defects. Show us the proof of your love. I am not speaking as though I did not see among you abundant proofs of your love; but I am speaking to some who perhaps, as yet, have never realized their position of privilege in reference to Christ and to his people; and they have never let their hearts go out as they should go out towards those whom Christ has purchased with his precious blood.

Show us the proof of your love *to the ungodly*, too—to this great city of four millions. Show us the proof of your love by trying to snatch the firebrands from the flame. Be up and doing. Stand at the street corners, if you can, and preach Jesus Christ. Scatter the printed gospel in every room to which you have access. Talk of Christ to your workpeople. Speak of him to your companions. Endeavour to spread this potent all-heal, this cure for all manner of spiritual diseases, for otherwise, talk as you may, profess as you may, we shall have to say to you, "Show us the proof of your love."

I have only given you a sort of charcoal sketch of what might be the proof of your love: I have not drawn the picture or laid on the colours. Think, dear friends, how you can give such proof at once.

III. But now, in the third place, WHY IS THIS PROOF CALLED FOR? Somebody says, "Why am I called upon to prove my love?" Do not grieve even if I press it very hard upon you, for your case will be something like that of Simon Peter when he too was pressed exceedingly.

Peter was grieved when his Master said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Now the Lord did not ask it because he doubted him, for he knew Peter's heart. Peter's appeal was a true one, "Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee." Do not therefore resent it, and say, "Why should I prove my love?" No, but just listen. *True love always longs to prove itself.* It does not need a command to do it. It is waiting for an opportunity. It is so with your domestic life. You know that it is so. I need not give instances. What a pleasure it is to show love to those we love! In a far higher degree, what a delight it is to a Christian to do something for Jesus! If you have never done anything distinctly for Jesus, what sort of a child of God can you be? I love my Master's service, and I can truly say that I think that I would do anything for his people: but I am not quite so sure about that as I am about the feeling that I would do anything *for him.* When I get a hold of something that is distinctly and undividedly for my Lord's glory, I am so glad to do it. To break an alabaster box of ointment upon his head is a rich delight: truly it might have been given to the poor and have blessed the poor, but Jesus, himself, is best. "It is a waste," somebody murmurs. Yes, yes, but to be wasteful for Christ is the noblest economy. O hearts that love your Lord, never count the silver when you are spending for Jesus! Break the box! Pour out the ointment! The room will be filled with the perfume, and it will not be wasted. Even if there were no nostril to smell it, if Jesus alone had the refreshment of it, it would be all the better. I like to enter the glade of a forest where there are spots unseen of eye of man, and thickets of brake through which nobody but the red deer has ever passed. I delight to sit down by a little rippling brook upon a bank of thyme undesecrated by human foot, and think, "This is God's garden, and every leaf waves for him." How dare the poet say that flowers which were born to blush unseen are wasting their fragrance on the desert air? Why, they are flowering for God, and he delights in them, and they are just the best-used flowers in the world. Oh to be just such a flower as that at times, and to feel that you have got away—away from the gardens where men may come and praise or dispraise, and offer mercenary prizes for flowers and fruits—away where God sees you, and delights in you. We should try to work for Jesus only. Proof is called for, not because Jesus doubts, but because he loves to please us by giving us opportunities of proving our love.

But one reason why we are called upon to prove our love is *that it may become a blessing to other people.* The Corinthians were to prove their love because the poor folks at Jerusalem were starving. It would be of no use for the Corinthians to sing a hymn about charity while the poor saints at Jerusalem had not a loaf to eat. No, they must prove their love, that it might be a benefit to others, and that the influence

of that love might spread to others, because the apostle says, "If you Corinthians do not discharge your promise, those people at Macedonia will throw it in my teeth, and do nothing themselves, and therefore, for the sake of the churches in Macedonia, you must be liberal." So, beloved, oftentimes one man, by serving his Master well, stirs up a whole regiment of other Christians, who become ashamed to be doing so little. I may preach a great many sermons, brethren, but they will do very little good compared with what your sermons will do, if, as a church, you live up to the mark as Christians. If in holy love, and concord, and every grace, you abound, other churches will say, "Look at this church." Oh that you may be such saints that others may be encouraged in their work for Christ by you: that is why you are asked to prove your love.

You are asked to prove your love, for *it is reasonable that you should do so.* God did not love you and keep it to himself, and say, "My name is love, but I will *do* nothing." No: he gave his Son from his bosom, his only Son, and that Son he gave to die. God is practical. That which he feels he does: that which he speaks is done. We have many idle words, but the word and mind of God come out in deeds of grace. Is it not right, therefore, that we should give practical proof of our love?

IV. Time fails me, or I would have dwelt on the fourth point, namely, WHO IT IS THAT CALLS FOR THIS PROOF OF OUR LOVE?

I will leave out everybody else but one, and say, it is *your Lord*, your own dying, living Saviour who says, "Show me the proof of your love." I will tell you how he is saying it. Affliction has come into your house. There is a dear one dead; and Jesus says "Now will you kick against me, or will you yield me your treasure? Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these dear ones? If so, thou wilt part with them and not complain." "Mary, dost thou love me better than mother, or sister, or friend? If so; thou wilt bless me when I take them away. Now is thy time; show me the proof of thy love by bowing before my chastening, and loving me still." Our Lord only takes from us what he gave to us; let us, therefore, bless his name. Bereaved one, that may be the proof of love to which he is calling *you.*

Perhaps you have had a difference lately with one to whom you ought to be united in friendship, and now your conscience is saying "Christians ought to live in peace and love." But Satan is saying "You were not to blame. Do not humble yourself before such a proud person as your opponent." But my Lord and Master says to you, "Show me the proof of your love. Forgive him for my sake even to seventy times seven; and if you have wronged him confess the wrong, and humble yourself for my sake. Because I washed my disciples' feet, show me the proof of your love by washing one another's feet." Attend to that admonition, I pray you.

But possibly there are some here who have had in their minds the project of doing something unusual for Jesus, or the church, or the poor, or for missions to the heathen. Satan has said, "You must not give so much as that." Jesus says, "I have prospered you: when others have failed in business I have taken care of you. Show me the proof of your love." Will you not hear his call? Do not hold back

your hand, and do not want anybody to persuade you, because that will spoil it all. It must be spontaneous. It must come from your own heart, moved only by the Spirit of God, if you wish it to be accepted. Perhaps I am addressing a young man who has been for years a member of the church; and it is crossing his mind "What shall I do to show my love?" and it is his ambition to be a missionary in a distant land. Keep not yourself back, my dear young brother. Should it rend a fond connection, or cost you your life, give Jesus such proof of your love as his Spirit suggests to you. Or is it that you ought to speak to people about their souls? The Lord will throw somebody in your way. Give a proof of your love by a holy bravery, and speak right out for Jesus Christ, and do not be ashamed. The Lord invites you to a closer fellowship with himself, to come higher up the mount of God, and to be more thoroughly consecrated. Then show him the proof of your love.

I leave this with you. If you love him, show it. If you do not love him, tremble. I will not repeat what the Scripture says, as though it came from myself, but I would have you recollect it. Paul says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,"—cursed with a curse at the coming of Christ. So it must be if you love not Christ.

Oh! if you do love him, be inventive. Think of a new thing that nobody else ever did for Jesus. Strike out a fresh path. Deny yourselves comforts to have the comfort of proving your love, as his Spirit shall guide and help you; and to his name be praise evermore. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—791, 811, 639.

Spurgeon's Birthday Book and Autographic Register.

Compiled from the Works of C. H. SPURGEON.

"Our young friends delight in possessing birthday albums, and here is one which is fit for a queen. We will say nothing of the contents, but the binding is simply gorgeous. Whether in cloth at 2s. 6d., or in a more luxurious form at 5s., this is a dainty birthday present, and is equal to any that have gone before it; we think we might venture to say that it is second to none. Facsimiles of the autographs of the Pastor and his wife are given in their proper places."—*The Sword and the Trowel.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."—Psalm lxviii. 20, 21.

WHATEVER may be said of the Old Testament dispensation, however dimly it may have revealed certain truths, there was one matter about which it was clear as the sun. Under the Old Testament economy the Lord God of Israel is ever most conspicuous. God is in all, and over all; and from the pages of the prophets, as well as from the lips of the temple choirs, we hear loudly sounding forth the note, "The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Hallelujah!" By priest and prophet, saint and seer, the one testimony is borne, "The Lord reigneth." You cannot read the Book of Job without trembling in the majestic presence of the Almighty; nor can you turn to the Psalms without being filled with solemn awe as you see David, and Asaph, and Heman adoring the Lord, who made heaven and earth and the sea. Everywhere, from Abraham to Malachi, man is of small account, and God is all in all. Very little consideration is given to any fancied rights and claims of man, but wonder is expressed that the Creator should be mindful of him. We read no discourse upon the dignity of human nature, or upon the beauty of human character; but God alone is holy, and when he looks from heaven he sees none that doeth good, no, not one. Man is rolled in the dust from which he sprang, and to which he must return; all his pride is cut down, and his comeliness withered, and over all is seen one God, and none beside him.

It will be a great offence if, coming into the brighter light of the New Testament, we are less vivid in our conceptions of the glory of God. If God should be less clearly seen in the person of our Lord Jesus, than he was under the symbols of the law, it will be the fault of our blinded hearts. It will be ill for us to turn day into night, and like owls to see less because the light is increased. Let it not be so among us, but let it be in our churches as in Israel of old, of which it was said, "in Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the

prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," and by him as the incarnate Word he has revealed himself with a sevenfold splendour, and therefore it should be our soul's great delight to perceive God in all things, to rejoice in his presence, and to magnify him in all things as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Psalmist in this particular case ascribes to the Lord universal action and power over us, for he ascribes to him the mercies of life and the issues of death. He says, "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits." The Lord heaps up his favours till their number loads the memory, and their value burdens the shoulders of gratitude. He gives us so many mercies that the mind is burdened in endeavouring to calculate their worth: we are overwhelmed with a sense of his goodness, and the consciousness that we cannot return any adequate thanks for such abundance of daily grace. Such is our God in life, and what will he be in death? Shall we be without him there? No, blessed be his name, "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." His kingdom includes the land of death-shade, and all the borders thereof. We shall not die without his permit, nor without his presence. Though temporal mercies will find their end when life ends, yet are there eternal mercies which throughout eternal life shall manifest the goodness of the Most High; and meanwhile by rescues, recoveries, and escapes we shall be preserved from prematurely descending to the tomb. If any of you, dear friends, have been brought near to the gates of death, if you have been laid low by wearisome sickness, if your heart has sunk within you in a sort of mental death, you will in coming back to health and strength most heartily bless the Lord who finds for us a way of return from the suburbs of the sepulchre. He is not only the God of life but the God of death; he keeps us in life, and makes life happy; he keeps us from death and from the fierce agencies which wait to drag us to the grave. There are issues out of the dark border-land of sickness, and peril, and despair, and the Lord leads us by his own right hand to cause us to escape. Doth he not say "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea"? We must, and we will praise him for this with a new song.

I gather from our text that death is in the hand of God, that escapes from death are manifestations of his divine power, and that he is to be praised for them.

The outline of this morning's discourse, as indicated by the text, is just this: first, *the sovereign prerogative of God*, "To God the Lord belong the issues from death": secondly, *the character of the sovereign* with whom this prerogative is lodged, "He that is our God is the God of salvation": and then, thirdly, *the solemn warning which this great sovereign gives* in reference to the exercise of his prerogative; weighty are the words, may the Holy Spirit cause us to feel their power—"God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."

1. First, then, with deep reverence let us speak upon THE SOVEREIGN PREROGATIVE OF GOD—"Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." Kings have been accustomed to keep the power of life and death in their own hands. The great King of kings, the sovereign Ruler and absolute Lord of all worlds reserves this to himself,—that he

shall permit men to die, or shall give them an issue from death at his own good will and pleasure. He can alike create and destroy. He sendeth forth his Spirit and they are created, and at his own pleasure he saith, "Return, ye children of men," and lo! they fall before him like autumn's faded leaves.

The prerogative of life or death belongs to God in a wide range of senses. First of all as to natural life, we are all dependent upon his good pleasure. We shall not die until the time which he appoints; for our death-time, like all our time, is in his hands. Our skirts may brush against the portals of the sepulchre, and yet we shall pass the iron gate unharmed if the Lord be our guard. The wolves of disease will hunt us in vain until God shall permit them to overtake us. The most desperate enemies may waylay us, but no bullet shall find its billet in any heart unless the Lord allows it. Our life does not even depend upon the care of angels, nor can our death be compassed by the malice of devils. We are immortal till our work is done, immortal till the immortal King shall call us home to the land where we shall be immortal in a still higher sense. When we are most sick, and most ready to faint into the grave, we need not despair of recovery, since the issues from death are in Almighty hands. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." When we have passed beyond the skill of the physician we have not passed beyond the succour of our God, to whom belong the issues from death.

Spiritually, too, this prerogative is with God. We are by nature under the condemnation of the law on account of our sins, and we are like criminals tried, convicted, sentenced, and left for death. It is for God, as the great Judge, to see the sentence executed, or to issue a free pardon, according as he pleases; and he will have us know that it is upon his supreme pleasure that this matter depends. Over the head of a universe of sinners I hear this sentence thundering, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Shut up for death, as men are by reason of their sins, it rests with God to pardon whom he may reserve; none have any claim to his favour, and it must be exercised upon mere prerogative, because he is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, and delighteth to pass by transgression and sin.

So, too, doth the Lord deliver his own believing people from those "deaths oft" which make up their experience. Though we are in Christ Jesus delivered from death as a penalty, yet we often feel an inward death, caused by the old nature, which exercises a deadening influence within us. We feel the sentence of death in ourselves that we may not trust in ourselves, but in Jesus, in whom our life is hid. It may be that for a season our joys are damped, our spiritual vigour is drained away, and we hardly know whether we have any spiritual life left within us. We become like the trees in winter, whose substance is in them but the sap ceases to flow, and there is neither fruit nor leaf to betray the secret life within. We scarcely feel a spiritual emotion in these sad times, and dare not write ourselves among the living in Zion. At such times God the Lord can give us back the fulness of life, he can restore our soul from the pit of corruption and cause us not only to have life but to have it more abundantly. The issues from death are with the quickening

Spirit, and when our soul cleaveth to the dust he can revive us again till we rejoice with joy unspeakable.

As the climax of all, when we shall come actually to die, and these bodies of ours shall descend into the remorseless grave, as probably they will, in the hands of our Redeeming Lord are the issues from death. The archangel is even now waiting for the signal: one blast of his trumpet shall suffice to gather the chosen from all lands, from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north. Then death itself shall die away, and the righteous shall arise

> "From beds of dust and silent clay
> To realms of everlasting day."

"I am the resurrection and the life," saith Christ, and he is both of these to all his people. Is he not life, for he saith, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"? Is he not resurrection, for he saith, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"? That bright illustrious day in which the saints shall rise with their Lord will show how unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.

Our translation is a very happy one, because it bears so many renderings, and includes not only escape from death, deliverance from condemnation, revival from spiritual death, and uplifting from deadly mental depression, but recovery from death's direct havoc, by our being raised again from the tomb. In all these respects the Lord Jesus hath the key of death; he openeth and no man shutteth, he shutteth and no man openeth.

Concerning this prerogative we may say, first, that to God belongs *the right to exercise it.* This right springs, first, from his being our Creator. He saith "all souls are mine." He has an absolute right to do with us as he pleases, seeing he hath made us, and not we ourselves. Men forget what they are, and boast great things; but truly they are but as clay on the potter's wheel, and he can fashion them or can break them as he pleases. They think not so, but he knoweth their thoughts, that they are vain. Oh the dignity of man! What a theme for a sarcastic discourse! As the frog in the fable swelled itself till it burst asunder, so doth man in his pride and envy against his Maker, who nevertheless sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, and reckoneth men as though they were grasshoppers, and regardeth whole nations of them as the small dust of the balance. The Lord's prerogative of creation is manifestly widened morally by our forfeiture of any consideration which might have arisen out of obedience and rectitude if we had possessed them. Our fault has involved forfeiture of the creature's claims, whatever they may have been. We are all attainted of high treason, and we have each one been guilty of personal rebellion, and therefore we have not the rights of citizens, but lie under sentence of condemnation. What saith the infallible voice of God? "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." We have come under this curse; justice has pronounced us guilty, and by nature we abide under condemnation. If then the Lord shall be pleased to deliver us from death it rests with him to do so, but we have no right to any such deliverance, nor can we urge any argument which would avail in the courts of justice for reversal of sentence or stay of

execution. Before the bar of justice our case must go hard if we set up up any plea of right. We shall be driven away with the disdain of the impartial Judge if we urge our suit upon that line. Our wisest course is to appeal to his mercy and to his sovereign grace, for there alone is our hope. Understand me clearly: if the Lord shall suffer us all to perish we shall only receive our deserts, and we have not one of us a shade of claim upon his mercy: we are therefore absolutely in his hands, and to him belong the issues from death.

This right of God to save is further made manifest by the redemption of his people. It might have been said that God had no right to save if by saving he would abridge his justice; but now that he hath laid help upon one that is mighty, and his only-begotten Son has become a victim in our place, to magnify the law and make it honourable, the Lord God hath an unquestionable right to deliver from death his own redeemed, for whom the Substitute has died. Our God saves his people in consistency with justice: no one can question his doing right even when he justifies the ungodly. His right and power over the issues from death are in the case of his own blood-bought ones clear as the sun at noon-day, and who shall dispute with him?

Our text, however, puts the prerogative upon the one sole ground of lordship, and we prefer to come back to that. "Unto God *the Lord* belong the issues from death." It is a doctrine which is very unpalateable in these days, but one nevertheless which is to be held and taught, that God is an absolute sovereign, and doeth as he wills. The words of Paul may not be suffered to sleep,—"Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" The Lord cannot do amiss, his perfect nature is a law unto itself. In his case *Rex* is *Lex*, the King is the law. He is the source and fountain of all right, truth, rule, and order. Being absolutely perfect within himself, and comprehending all things, it is not possible for him to do otherwise than right. He is goodness, truth, and righteousness itself, and therefore the prerogatives of his throne are not bounded, and to the Lord of heaven and earth belong the issues from death.

Enough with regard to that matter of right. I go on to notice that *the Lord has the power of this prerogative.* With him is the ability to deliver men from natural death. Jehovah Rophi is a physician who is never baffled. Medicines may fail, but not the great Maker of all plants and herbs and useful drugs. Study and experience may be at a nonplus, but he who fashioned the human frame knows its most intricate parts, and can soon correct its disorders. God can restore when a hundred diseases are upon us all at once. Take courage, thou fainting one, and look up. Certainly, as to the soul, there is no case of man so far gone that God cannot find an issue out of its death. He can cast out seven devils, and a legion of diabolical sins. To God the Lord belong the issues from death, however foul the sin, and however forlorn the condition caused by transgression. He who raised Lazarus from the grave after four days can raise the most corrupt from the grave of their iniquities. O that awakened sinners would believe this!

I remember reading of an aged minister who had for some years fallen into deep despondency. He gave up his pulpit, and kept himself very

much alone, always writing bitter things against himself. At last, when he was on a sick bed, a servant of God was sent to him, who dealt wisely with him. This good man said to the despairing one, "Brother, do you believe that passage, 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him'?" "I believe it," said he, "with all my heart, but I am convinced—" Here the other stopped him, "I do not ask what your convincements may be, nor what your feelings may be, but I come to say to you, the man who trusts that promise lives." This plain declaration of the gospel was made by the divine Comforter the means of supreme consolation to the despairing one; may it be equally useful to all those who hear it. He who can hang his soul's hope upon the infinite ability of Christ to save is a saved man. He that believeth on him hath everlasting life. What a blessing this is! The devil may tell me that I never can issue out of deserved death, and that I am shut up for ever under the just results of my trespasses; my own conscience knowing my undeservingness may also condemn me a thousand times over; but unto God the Lord belong the issues from death, and he can and will pluck me from between the jaws of death since I believe in him. He is able to bring up those whom he ordains to save even from the utmost depths of despair. The absolute right of God is supported by almighty power, and thus his prerogative is made a matter of fact.

Nor is this all, *the Lord has actually exercised this prerogative* in abundant cases. As to those issues from death which are seen in restoration from sickness, I need not remind you that these are plentiful enough. At times these have come in a miraculous form, as when Hezekiah had his life lengthened in answer to prayer, and when many others were healed by the Saviour and his apostles. Life has been preserved in a lion's den, and in the belly of a fish, in a fiery furnace, and in the heart of the sea. Death has no arrow in his quiver which can hurt the man whom God ordains to live. Out of imminent peril the Lord still delivers in the ordinary course of providence, and there are persons present this morning who are proofs of his interposing power. He has raised some of us from prostration of body and depression of spirit, he has rescued others from shipwreck and fire in very singular ways, and here we are, living to praise God, as we do this day.

God has exercised this prerogative spiritually. In what a myriad of cases has he delivered souls from death! Ask yon white-robed hosts in heaven, "Has not God displayed in you his sovereign power to save?" Ask many here below, who have tasted that he is gracious, and they will tell, "He saved me." According to his mercy he has issued a free pardon, signed by his royal hand, saying, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." Why his sovereignty has interposed to rescue us from death we cannot tell. We often ask, "Why was I made to hear his voice? How was it that I was made to live?" But we are silent with grateful wonder, and invent no answer. Divine will, backed by divine power, worked out the sovereign purpose of love, and here we are, saved from so great a death by love invincible.

Yes, indeed, to God the Lord belong the issues from death. Come, then, brethren and sisters, *let him have all the glory of it.* If you are alive after a long sickness, bless the Lord, who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases. If you are saved from condemnation

this morning, and know it, bless the Lord, who accepts us in the beloved. If you feel at this moment that the death of sin has no dominion over you, for the life of grace reigns within, then bless the Lord who has quickened you into newness of life. Glorify his name this day, who in love to your soul has delivered you from the pit of corruption, and cast all your sins behind his back. Once more, if you have a glorious hope of a blessed resurrection, and feel that you can smile on death because God smiles on you, then bless the Lord who will raise you up at the last day. Your Redeemer liveth, and you shall live because he lives, therefore clap your hands with holy glee. Bless the all-glorious name of him to whom belong the issues from death.

II. Thus have I set forth the prerogative; and now, secondly, follow me with your thoughts while I show THE CHARACTER OF THE SOVEREIGN in whom that prerogative is vested. We cannot upon this earth exhibit much love to human princes who claim absolute dominion. Imperialism is not to our mind. Among the worst curses that have ever fallen upon mankind have been absolute monarchs: nowadays men shake them off as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. The Lord grant we may see the last of all despotic dynasties, that the nations may be free. We cannot endure a tyrant, and yet if we could have absolutely perfect despots it might be the best possible form of government. Assuredly, the great and eternal God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, is absolutely perfect; and we may be well content to leave all prerogatives and vest all powers in his hands. He has never trampled on the rights of the meanest, nor forgotten the weakest. His foot doth not needlessly crush a worm, nor doth he beat down a fly in wantonness. He has never done a wrong, nor wrought an injustice. *We* oppress each other, but the Judge of all oppresses none. The Lord is holy in all his ways, and his mercy endureth for ever; and the amplest prerogatives are safely lodged in such hands.

Our text yet further tells us who it is in whose hands the issues of life and death are left: "He that is our God is the God of salvation." Sinner, your salvation rests with God, but do not therefore be discouraged, for that God with whom the matter rests is the God of salvation, or of "salvations," for so the Hebrew hath it. What mean we by this?

The Scripture signifieth, first, that *salvation is the most glorious of all God's designs.* Since this world was made, the working out of salvation has run through history like a silver thread. The Lord made the world, and lit up moon and stars, and set heaven, earth, and sea in order, with his eye upon salvation in the whole arrangement. He has ruled all things by his supreme government with the same end. The great wheels of his providence have been revolving these six thousand years before the eyes of men, and among them, and at their back, a hand has been ever passing to conduct every movement to the ultimate issue, which is the salvation of the covenanted ones. This is the object which is dearest to Jehovah's heart. He loves best to save. God was pleased with creation, but not as he is with redemption. When he made the heavens and the earth it was every-day work to him, and he merely spake and said, "It is good"; but when he gave his Son to die to redeem his people, and his elect were being saved, he did not speak with the prosaic brevity of creation, but he sang. Is it not written, "He shall rest in his love, he

shall rejoice over thee with singing"? Redemption is a matter which Jehovah sings about. Are you able to imagine what it must be for God to sing? For Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to burst forth into a joyous hymn over the work of salvation! This is because salvation is dearest to God's heart, and in it his whole nature is most intensely engaged. Judgment is his strange work, but he delighteth in mercy. He has put forth many attributes in the accomplishment of other works, but in this he has laid out all his being. He is seen in this as mighty to save. Herein he hath bared his arm. For this he has taken his Son out of his bosom. For this he has caused his Only-begotten to be bruised and put to grief. Salvation is the eternal purpose of the inmost heart of God, and by it his highest glory is revealed. This, then, is the God to whom belong the issues from death: the God whose grandest design is salvation. Sing unto his name and exult that the Lord reigneth, even the Lord who is my strength and my song, who also hath become my salvation.

Ask ye yet again what this meaneth—"He that is our God is the God of salvation," and we remind you that *the most delightful works which the Lord has performed have been works of salvation.* To save our first parents at Eden's gate, and give them a promise of victory over the serpent, was joy to God. To house Noah in the ark was also his pleasure. The drowning of a guilty world was needful, but the saving of Noah was pleasant to the Lord our God. He destroyed the earth with his left hand, but with his right hand he shut in the only righteous ones he found. To save his people is ever his joy: he goes about it eagerly. He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind when he came to deliver his chosen. What noise he makes about his saving work at the Red Sea! The whole Scripture is full of allusions to the great salvation out of Egyptian bondage, and even in heaven they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The Old Testament seems to ring with the note, "Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The Lord did greatly rejoice to make a way through the wilderness, and a path through the deeps for his own people, that he might work salvation for them in the midst of the earth. Afterwards in the Old Testament how well they keep the records of salvations! They tell us of the kings that oppressed the people, but how lovingly they linger over the way in which God redeemed Israel from her adversaries. What a note of joy there is about Goliath slain, and the son of Jesse bearing his gory head, and Israel delivered from Philistia's vaunts! Well did they say, "He that is our God is the God of salvation." He takes delight in deeds of grace: these are his enjoyments. These are his recreations. He comes out in his royal robes and puts on his crown jewels when he rises to save his people, and therefore his servants cry aloud, "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved." This then is the God in whom is vested all sovereignty over the issues from death. He takes pleasure, not in the destruction, but in the salvation of the sons of men. Where could the prerogative be better laid up?

"He that is our God is the God of salvation," also means that at this

present time the God who is preached to us is the God of salvation. *We live at this moment under the dispensation of mercy.* The sword is sheathed, the scales of justice are put by. Those scales are not destroyed, and that sword is not broken, nor even blunted, but for a while it slumbereth in its scabbard. To-day over all our heads is held out the silver sceptre of eternal love. The angelic carol, first heard by shepherds at Bethlehem, lingers still in the upper air, if you have ears to hear it,—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The mediatorial reign of Christ is that of multiplied salvations. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" is the saving proclamation of the reigning God. The God of the Christian age is the God of salvation. He is set forth before us as coming to seek and to save the lost. He dwells among us by his abiding Spirit, not as a Judge punishing criminals, but as a Father receiving his wandering children to his bosom, and rejoicing over them as once dead but now alive again. God in Christ Jesus, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, is he, who quickeneth whom he will, and is ordained to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. Where else could all power be more safely laid up?

Once more: "He that is our God is the God of salvation" means this, that to his covenanted ones, *to those who can call him "our God" he is specially and emphatically the God of salvation.* There is no destruction for those who call him "our God," for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Jesus came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. "This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be"—our destroyer?—no, "he will be our guide even unto death." This God is our sun and shield, and he will give grace and glory. Now, mark well this fact: we who believingly call the Lord our God this morning will tell you that we are saved entirely through the sovereign grace of God, and not through any natural betterness of our own, nor through anything that we have done to deserve his favour. It was because he looked upon us with pity and kindly regard when we were dead in sin that therefore we live. When we were lying in our blood, and in our filthiness, he passed by in the time of love, and he said to us, "Live." If he had passed by, and left us to die, he would have been infinitely just in so doing, but his heart was otherwise inclined. He looked on us and said "Live," and we lived, and we bless his name that we are living still, and praising his eternal and infinite mercy. He who saith "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal," is he who has quickened us, though we were dead in trespasses and sins. Surely, he who has exercised his prerogative so kindly towards us may be trusted to exercise it towards all who come to him according to his gracious invitation. If there be any man who saith, "I rejoice in the election of God, because, although he hath saved me, he hath left others to perish," I desire to have no sympathy with his spirit. My joy is of a far different kind, for I argue that he who saved such an unworthy one as I am will cast out none that come to him by faith. His election is not narrow, for it comprehends a number that no man can number, yea, all that will believe in Jesus. He waiteth to be gracious, and him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out. The wedding feast needs countless guests,

and every seat must be filled. We wish that all the human race would come and accept the provisions of infinite love, and we are anxious to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. We rejoice to know that if any man be shut out from Christ and hope he shuts himself out, though at the same time we feel that if any man be shut in he did not shut himself in, but undeserved grace wrought out his salvation. Justice rules in condemnation, but grace reigns in salvation. In salvation we must ascribe all to grace, absolutely and unreservedly. There must be no stammering over this truth. Some begin to say grace, but they do not out with the word: they stutter it into "free-will." This will never do. This is not according to the teaching of Holy Scripture, nor is it in accordance with fact. If there is any man here who thinks that he has been saved as the result of his own will, apart from the powerful grace of God, let him throw his cap up, and magnify himself for ever. "Glory be to my own good disposition!" But as for me, I will fall at the foot of the throne of God, and say, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Hadst thou, O God, left me to my own free will, I had continued still to despise thy love, and to reject thy mercy." Surely, all the people of God agree that this is the fact in their own case, however they may differ theoretically from the general statement.

Yes, the prerogative of life and death is in good hands, it is in the hands of him who is the God of our salvation, and I beseech every one here present who is not saved to be encouraged to bow before the throne of the great King, and sue for mercy of him who is so ready to save. Go home and try to merit salvation, and you will waste your efforts. Go about to fit yourself for mercy, and to fashion some good that may attract the regard of God, and you will befool yourselves, and insult the majesty of heaven: but come just as you are, all guilty, empty, meritless, and fall before the great King, whom you have so often provoked, and beseech him of his infinite mercy to blot out your transgressions, to change your natures, and to make you his own, and see if he will cast you away. Is it not written, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared"? And again, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." His throne is a throne of grace. Mercy is built up for ever before him. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Did ever a penitent sue for pardon at his sovereign feet to be rejected? Never; nor shall such a case happen while the earth remaineth. If you try to purchase his favour you shall be refused; if you claim it as a right you shall be rejected; but if you will come and accept salvation of the divine charity, and receive it through the atonement of Christ Jesus, the Lord will find for you an escape from death. Hear the witness of Jeremiah, and be encouraged to cast yourself before the Lord:—"I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life."

III. Our last duty is to hear THE SOLEMN WARNING OF OUR SOVEREIGN LORD. A new god has been lately set up among men, the god of modern Christianity, the god of modern thought, a god made of

honey or sugar of lead. He is all leniency, gentleness, mildness, and indifference in the matter of sin. Justice is not in him, and as for the punishment of sin, he knows it not. The Old Testament, as you are, no doubt, made aware by the wise men of this world, takes a very harsh view of God, and therefore modern wisdom sets it on one side. Forsooth, one half the word of God is out of date, and turned to waste paper. Although our Lord Jesus did not come "to destroy the law or the prophets," but to fulfil them, yet the advanced thinkers of these enlightened times tell us that the idea of God in the Old Testament is a false one. We are to believe in a new god, who does not care whether we do right or wrong, for by his arrangement all will come to the same end in the long run. There may be a little twisting about for awhile for some who are rather incorrigible, but it will all come right at last. Live as you like, go and swear and drink, go and oppress the nations, and make bloody wars, and act as you will; by jingo you will be all right at last. This is roughly the modern creed which poisons all our literature. But let me say, by Jehovah this shall not be as men dream. Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth, must do right. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: the God of the whole earth shall he be called. He hath not changed one whit in the stern integrity of his nature, and he will by no means spare the guilty. Read, then, the last verse of our text, and believe that it is as true to-day as when it was first written, and that if Jesus himself were here, the meek and lowly one would say it in tones of tearful solemnity, but he would utter it none the less. "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."

It is clear from these words that God is not indifferent to human character. Our God knows his enemies, he does not mistake them for friends, nor treat them as such. He regards iniquity as a trespass, and therefore he has not broken down the bounds of law, nor the hedges of right: there are trespasses still, and God perceives them, and notes them down, and such as go on in their trespasses are trying his long-suffering and provoking his justice. God sleeps not, neither does he wink at human sin, but calls upon all men everywhere to repent.

And it is clear too that God has the power to smite those who rebel against him. Dream not of natural laws which will screen the wicked—"He shall wound the head of his enemies." They may lift up those heads as high as they please, but they cannot be beyond the reach of his hand. He will not merely bruise their heels, or wound them on the back with blows which may be healed, but at their heads he will aim fatal blows, and lay them in the dust. He can do it, and he will. They may be very strong, and their scalp covered with hair may indicate unabated strength, but they cannot resist omnipotence. There may be no sign as yet of the baldness which comes of weakness, or of the scantiness of hair which is a token of old age, but vain are they who boast their vigour, for in their prime he can cause them to wither as the grass of the field. The proud may vaunt themselves of their beauty: their hairy scalp, like that of Absalom, may be their boast, but as the Lord made the hair of Absalom to be the instrument of his doom, so can he make the glory of man to be his ruin. Pride

goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. No man is out of the reach of God, and no nation either. The great ones stand on high upon their lofty places, and they talk about the "vulgar crowd," and despise the godly of the land. As for foreign races, how lightly are they esteemed, though one God has made them all. Populations and nations, what are they? Mere food for powder when a proud nation is set upon its own aggrandizement. Overturn their kingdoms, slaughter their patriotic defenders, redden the earth with blood, burn their houses, starve their women and children. Doth God know, and is there judgment in the Most High? We are a great people, and have the men, the ships, and the money. Who shall call us to account? Yet let the still small voice be heard. Thus said the Lord to a great nation of old, "Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know." From such chastisements good Lord deliver us.

When the Lord does put his hand to the work of vengeance his smiting will be terrible, even an utter overthrow, for it will be a smiting upon the head. If he doth not smite his enemies until the hour of death, what a blow will they then receive! They boasted of their self-righteousness, or of their greatness; but, oh, what terror will seize them when at the last moment, while they dream of heaven they are smitten down into the unfathomable deep, where woe shall be the everlasting reward of their daring rebellion against their King! Warriors of old times would when they went to battle often shave off all their hair, except those locks which are on the hinder part of the scalp; yet when they turned to flee it frequently happened they were grasped by their pursuers by their flowing hair. God does not often take the wicked by the forelock, for he has great patience, and bears with them. In special cases, as when young men through dissipated habits hasten on their doom, he takes them in front; but as a rule he waits in mercy, and yet he suffers them not to go unpunished, for at the last he seizes their hairy scalp. If for fourscore years infinite patience should permit a man to continue in his rebellion, yet if he goeth on in his trespasses at the very last God shall thrust his hand into his hairy scalp and grasp him to his destruction.

Turn ye, then, ye that know not God, turn ye at his rebuke this morning, for the rebuke is meant in love; and if I have used hard words it is because my heart is honestly anxious that you would repent and escape to him who hath in his power the issues from death. I am not like yon flatterers who tell you that there is a little hell and a little God, from which you naturally infer that you may live as you like. Both you and they will perish everlastingly if you believe them. There is a dreadful hell, for there is a righteous God. Turn ye to him, I entreat you, while yet in Christ Jesus he sets mercy before you. He is the God of salvation, and entreats you to come and accept of his great grace in Christ Jesus.

The Lord bless this word according to his own mind, and unto him be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Peter i. 9—12.

"Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word."—Psalm cxix. 41.

THESE two texts will be to me as a bow and a sword: the first for shooting the arrows of truth, and the second for close quarters in dealing with individual consciences. You will see the reason for the pair of texts as we proceed. May the Holy Spirit make use of both according to his own mind.

Last Sabbath-day I discoursed upon the God of salvation: this morning our principal object is to speak of that salvation itself. I then tried to show that God is always the same, and that the God of the Old Testament, unto whom belongeth the issues from death, is the God of our salvation still. My first text runs upon the same line, for it teaches us that the prophets of old, who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified concerning the same salvation which has been reported to us by the apostles as actually accomplished. There has been no new salvation; there has been a change in the messengers, but they have all spoken of one thing; and, though their tidings have been more clearly understood in these latter days, the substance of the good news is still the same. The Old Testament and the New are one, inspired by the same Spirit, and filled with the same subject, namely, the one promised Messiah. The prophets foretold what the apostles reported. The seers looked forward, and the evangelists look backward: their eyes meet at one place; they see eye to eye, and both behold the cross.

I shall aim this morning at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your

choice inheritance; and still more shall I labour to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. Ah, my unsaved hearers, how great is your loss in missing the salvation of God! "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" O that you might be rescued from such folly! Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will show you the preciousness of this salvation, and then you will no longer neglect, despise, or refuse it, but will offer the prayer which I have selected as a sort of second text, and entreat the Lord to let his mercies come to you, even his salvation. The prayer may be helpful in enabling you to take with you words and turn unto the Lord. God grant it may be so!

First, I shall in much simplicity, with a vehement desire for the immediate conviction and salvation of my hearers, try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us.

Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because *it is a salvation of grace.* The tenth verse says, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of *the grace that should come unto you.*" Salvation is altogether of grace, grace which comes from God in his mercy to man in his helplessness. The gospel does not come to you asking something of you, but its hands are laden with gifts more precious than gold, which it freely bestows upon guilty men. It comes to us, not as a reward for the obedient and deserving, but as a merciful boon for the disobedient and undeserving. It treats with us, not upon the ground of justice, but upon terms of pure mercy. It asks no price and exacts no purchase; it comes as a benefactor, not as a judge. In the gospel God giveth liberally and upbraideth not. We are accustomed not only to say "grace," but "free grace." It has been remarked that this is a tautology. So it is, but it is a blessed one, for it makes the meaning doubly clear and leaves no room for mistake. Since it is evidently objectionable to those who dislike the doctrine intended, it is manifestly forcible, and therefore we will keep to it. We feel no compunction in ringing such a silver bell twice over—grace, free grace. Lest any should imagine that grace can be otherwise than free, we shall continue to say, not only grace, but free grace, so long as we preach. You are lost, my dear hearer, and God proposes your salvation, but not on any ground of your deserving to be saved, else would the proposal most assuredly fall to the ground in the case of many of you: I might have said in the cases of us all, though some of you think not so. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and he is merciful; because you are necessitous and he is bountiful. Why, methinks every man who hears this good news should open both his ears, and lean forward, that he may not lose a word. Yes, and he should open his heart, too; for salvation by grace is most suitable to all men, and they need it greatly. Only give intimation that goods are to be had gratis, and your shop will be besieged with customers. Those who want us to notice their wares are often crafty enough to put at the head of their advertisement what is not true, "*To be given away*": but salvation's grand advertisement is true; salvation is everything for nothing: pardon free, Christ free, heaven free. "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our good

Physician has none but gratis patients. Since the boons which the God of all grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, he does not barter and chaffer with them, but makes his blessings free as air. I am sure that if you feel yourselves to be guilty, the very idea of being saved by grace will have a charm for you. To a thirsty man the sound of a rippling stream is music, and to a convinced conscience free pardon is as rivers of water in the wilderness. Oh, that all the world would listen when we have such a message to tell.

Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that *it is by faith.* "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Salvation is not obtained by penances, painful and humiliating: nor by despondency and despair; nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labour and pain; but entirely and alone by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus. Do you ask—is it so, that salvation is by believing, simply believing? Such is the statement of the word of God. We proclaim it upon the warrant of infallible Scripture. "All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the like kind. "Repent ye and believe the gospel," is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Believe only," and "Jesus only," are our two watchwords. Now, it is singularly foolish that men should cavil at this which ought to please them. The very simplicity of faith they cavil at. What, shall it be so, that the gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with mercy for being too generous to them? If there be a condition, is it wisdom on our part to contend with God because that condition seems to be too slight? What would you have for a condition? Would you have it proclaimed that men must be saved by works? Which among you would then be saved? Your works are imperfect and full of evil. The law cannot justify you, it condemns you. As long as you are under the law hath not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought ye not, ye sons of men, to bless God that salvation is of faith that it might be by grace, and that it might be possible to you, and sure to all the seed? The sinner cannot keep the law of God; he has already broken it most terribly, and he is himself enfeebled and depraved by the fall. Adam did not stand when he was in his perfection; what shall we do who are ruined by his fall, and full of evil? By the grace of God the sinner can believe in Jesus: this is ceasing from his own power and merit, and leaving himself in his Saviour's hands. Salvation by faith thus sets an open door before those whom the law shuts out; it is in every way adapted to the case of the guilty and fallen, and such characters should hasten to accept salvation thus presented to them. O my God, how is it that this message does not at once arouse all who hear it to an eager acceptance of thy salvation? O that the Spirit of God would make these appeals powerful with you!

The gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, *for it has engrossed the thoughts of prophets.* The text says, "Of which salvation

the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." Those great men, the choice spirits of the ages which they adorned, were delighted to preach of this salvation as a blessing to be hereafter revealed. They did not themselves altogether understand what they were called to reveal, for the Holy Spirit often carried them beyond themselves and made them utter more than they understood. The inspiration of the Bible is verbal inspiration. In some cases it must have been only verbal; in every case it must have been mainly so. The human mind is not able to understand and to express all the thoughts of God, they are too sublime; and therefore God dictated to the prophets the very language which they should deliver,—language of which they themselves could not see the far-reaching meaning. They rejoiced in the testimony of the Spirit within them, but they were not free from the necessity to search, and to search diligently if they would for themselves derive benefit from the divine revelation. I know not how this is, but the fact is clearly stated in the text, and must be true. Oh, my hearers, how diligently you ought to search the Scriptures and listen to the saving word! If men that had the Holy Ghost, and were called "seers," nevertheless searched into the meaning of the word which they themselves spoke, what ought such poor things as we are to do in order to understand the gospel? It should be our delight to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the doctrines of grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation which gained the attentive mind of Daniel, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel. O that the long list of great and holy men would have some weight with thoughtless ones. I would cause a noble line of prophets to pass before you this morning that you may see how many of them spake of Christ and his salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spake of the Sun of righteousness as near his rising, they all spoke in Jehovah's name for your sakes. From Moses down to Malachi, all of these lived, and many of them died, that they might bear witness to "the grace which is come unto you." They themselves were, no doubt saved; but, still, the full understanding and enjoyment of the truth was reserved for us. Unto them it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things of God. They lighted lamps which shine for future ages; they told of a Christ who was actually to come in the latter days, to work out his redemption after they had all died in faith without a sight of his actual coming. You and I live in the light of a finished salvation. God has appeared in human flesh; Christ has borne the guilt of man; his atonement is completed. Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into the glory, pleading for believers. Surely that which prophets thought it worth their while to study by night and by day, though they knew that they should never see it, ought to be thought worthy of the devout attention of those immediately concerned in it. If Daniel set his face by prayer and study, in fasting and in loneliness, to search out the salvation of the future, we ought at once to seek for the salvation which is now present among us. If Isaiah spake with golden tongue, as the very Chrysostom of the old dispensation; if Jeremiah wept, like a Niobe, rivers of tears; if Ezekiel, despite the splendour of his princely intellect, was almost blinded by the splendour of his visions—if the whole goodly fellowship of the prophets lived

and died to study and to foretell the great salvation, we ought to give most earnest heed to it. If they pointed us to the Lamb of God, and according to the best of their light foretold the coming of the Redeemer, then woe unto us if we trifle with heaven's message, and cast its blessings behind our backs. By all the prophets whom the Lord has sent, I beseech you, give his salvation a hearty welcome, and rejoice that you have lived to see it.

Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they "are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." *The apostles followed the prophets in testifying to this salvation*, and with the apostles there was an honourable fellowship of earnest evangelists and preachers. I will not stay to point out to you the admirable character of these men, but I would beg you to observe that, having seen Christ Jesus for themselves personally, they were not deceived. Many of them had eaten and drank with him: all the apostles had done so: they had been with him in familiar intercourse, and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen him after he had risen from the dead. These men spake with the accent of conviction. If they were duped, there certainly never was another instance of such persons, and so many of them, being so utterly deluded. They continued throughout all their lives to bear hardships and to endure reproaches for the sake of bearing witness to what they had seen and heard, and all the apostles but one died a martyr's death rather than allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon the truth of their report. The text says that they reported these things when they preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the word, dressed in no robes but those of poverty, having no distinctions but those of shame and suffering, no power but that of the Holy Spirit. I hear them fearlessly lifting up their voices among a warrior population, or gently testifying in peaceful homes: they evangelize the open country, they instruct the capital itself, Cæsar's household hears of them. I see them far away among the Parthians and Scythians, telling the barbarians that there is salvation, and that Jesus has accomplished it. With equal joy I see them telling cultured Greeks that God was in Christ, a man among men, and that the incarnate God died in man's stead that believing men might be delivered from the wrath of God, and from the plague of sin. These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives, and therefore I feel that for us in these times to trifle with God's word, and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the gospel, is an insult to their honoured memories. You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you. From the dead they bear witness against you, and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you.

Nor have we merely prophets and apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, "Which things *the angels desire to look into*." We know very little of these heavenly beings: we know, however, that they are pure spirits, and that the elect angels have not fallen into sin. These beings are not concerned in the atonement of Christ so far as it is a ransom for sin, seeing they have never transgressed: they may,

however, derive some advantage from his death, but of that we cannot now speak particularly. They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. They were pictured, you know, upon the ark of the covenant, as standing upon the mercy-seat, and looking down upon it with steady gaze. Perhaps Peter was thinking of this holy imagery. They stand intently gazing into the marvel of Propitiation by blood. Can you quite see the beauty of this spectacle? If we knew that a door was opened in heaven, would not men be anxious to look in and see heaven's wonders; but the case is here reversed, for we see a window opened towards this fallen world, and heavenly beings looking down upon the earth, as if heaven, itself had no such object of attraction as Christ and his salvation. Watts sang not amiss when he gave us the verse—

> "Archangels leave their high abode
> To learn new mysteries here, and tell
> The love of our descending God,
> The glories of Immanuel."

Paul tells us that to principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. For men to be lessons to angels, books for seraphs to read, is a strange fact. Perhaps the angelic enquirers ask such questions as this: How is God just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? At first it must have been, I think, a wonder that he who said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life. How could he who saith that he will by no means clear the guilty yet bestow his favours upon guilty men? Angels wonder as they see how, through the substitution of Jesus Christ, God can be sternly just and yet abundantly gracious; but while they learn this they long to discover more of the truth wrapped up in the one great sacrifice: they peer and pry, and search and consider, and hence the doctrines of the gospel are spoken of as "things which the angels desire to look into." Now, think you if these glorious spirits who needed not to be redeemed, yet intently gaze upon the Redeemer, should not we also desire to look into the mysteries of his death? O men and women, is it nothing to you that the Son of God should give his life a ransom for many? If these spotless ones marvel at that sacred bath of blood by which sin is washed away, will not you, who are covered with defilement, stop a while to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? Methinks, if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passer by, I should stop and look too. Have you never noticed in the streets that if one person stands still and looks up, or is occupied with gazing into a shop window, others become curious and look also? I would enlist that faculty of curiosity which is within every man, and prompt you to search with the angels as they pry into the underlying meaning of the fact and doctrine of atonement? They stand at the cross-foot ravished, astounded: yea, all heaven to this day has never ceased its amazement at the dying Son of God, made sin for men, and will none of you spare an hour to look this way and see your best Friend? Shall it be that time out of mind we must come into our pulpits and talk of Christ to deaf ears, and speak to

our fellow men about the grace which is brought unto them, to find that they treat it as an old wives' fable, or a story with which they have nothing to do? Ah, my careless hearer, I wish you were in the same plight as I was in once, when I was burdened with a sense of my transgressions. If you felt as I did, you would catch at that word "grace" right eagerly, and be delighted with the promise made to "faith." You would make up your mind that if prophets searched out salvation, if apostles reported it, if angels longed to know it, you yourself would find it, or perish in searching after it. Do you forget that you must have eternal life, or you are undone for ever? Do not trifle with your eternal interests! Do not be careless where earth and heaven are in earnest! Prophets, apostles, angels, all beckon you to seek the Lord. Awake, thou that sleepest. Arise, O sluggish soul! A thousand voices call thee to bestir thyself, and receive the grace which has come unto thee.

We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We have stood where angels gaze; now behold another wonder: we rise beyond them to the angels' Master. *Christ is the substance of this salvation.* For what saith the text? The prophets spake "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Ah, there is the point. To save men Jesus suffered. The manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured anguish inconceivable. All through his life our Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His was the bravest heart that ever lived, and the gentlest spirit that ever breathed, but the most crushed and down-trodden. He went from one end of our heavens to the other like a cloud of sympathy, dropping showers of blessing. All the trials of his people he carried in his heart, and all their sins pressed heavily upon his soul: his daily burden of care for all his people was such as none can sympathize with to the full, even though like him they have kept the flock of God. I have sometimes had intense sympathy with Moses,—I hope I am not egotistical in comparing small things with great,—when he cried, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." But what was the care of the tribes in the wilderness on Moses' heart compared with the myriads upon myriads that lay upon the heart of Christ, a perpetual burden to his spirit?

The sufferings of his life must never be forgotten, but they were consummated by the agonies of his death. There was never such a death. Physically, it was equal in pain to the sufferings of any of the martyrs; but its peculiarity of excessive grief did not lie in his bodily sufferings: his soul-sufferings were the soul of his sufferings. Martyrs are sustained by the presence of their God, but Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish *auto-da-fé*, for God was with his witnesses: but he was not with Christ. Here was the depth of his woe. Now, I pray you, if you will manifest some sign

of thought and softness, remember that if the Son of God became a man that he might suffer to the death for men, it is hard that men should turn deaf ears to the salvation which he accomplished. I hear from his cross his sad complaint, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." Oh, if you are born of woman, and have a heart that has any flesh about it, think well of the salvation, "the grace, which is brought unto you," by the sufferings of the Son of God.

One other step remains. It cannot be higher; it is on the same level, and I beseech you to stand upon it and think a while, you that have thought so little of yourselves and of your God. It is this. *The Holy Ghost is the witness to all this.* It was the Holy Ghost that spake in the prophets; it was the Holy Ghost who was with those who reported the gospel at the first; it is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. Do you not know that we have miracles in the Christian church still? Scoffers come to us and say, "Work a miracle, and we will believe you." We do work these miracles every day. Had you been present at a meeting held here last month you would have heard something not far short of one hundred persons one after another assert that by the preaching of the gospel in this place lately their lives have been completely changed. In the case of some of these the change is very obvious to all persons acquainted with them. How was this great change achieved? By the Holy Spirit through the gospel of your salvation. But I need not quote those special cases; there are many here who would tell you, if this were the time to speak, where they used to spend their Sabbaths, and what was their delight. All things have become new with them. They now seek after holiness as earnestly as they once pursued evil: though they are not what they want to be, they are not what they used to be. They never thought of purity or goodness, or anything of the kind, but they loved the wages of unrighteousness, and now they loathe the things they once loved. I have seen moral miracles quite as marvellous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead. This is the witness of the Holy Ghost which he continues to bear in the church, and by that witness I entreat you to stop and think of the blessed salvation which can work the same miracle in you. From the first day in which man fell, when the Holy Ghost at the gates of Eden presented the gospel in the first promise, all down the prophetic ages, and then by Christ, and by his apostles, and onward by all the men whom God has sent since then to speak with power, the Holy Ghost entreats you to consider Christ and his salvation. To this end he convinces the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment to come, that men may turn unto the salvation of God and live for ever. By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear hearers, no longer to neglect the great salvation which has won the admiration of all holy beings, and has the seal of the triune God upon its forefront.

II. So far have I commended my Lord's salvation, and now I would desire you, with all this in your own minds, to turn to the prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word." Use the prayer with this intent:—Lord, I have been hearing what prophets and apostles and angels think of thy salvation, what thy Son and what thy Spirit

think of it; now let me humbly say what I think of it: Oh that it were mine! Oh that it would come to me! This, then, is my second head. I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST.

I will say about it, first, that *it is in itself a very gracious prayer*, for it is offered on right grounds. "Let *thy mercies* come also unto me." There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is for mercy only. He pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the prerogative of the King, who can pardon offenders. Are you willing, my dear hearer, you who have never sought the Saviour, are you willing at this moment to stand on that ground, and to ask for salvation as the result of mercy? You shall have it on such terms, but you can never be saved until you will own that you are guilty and submit to justice. Observe the plural, "Let thy *mercies* come to me," as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, ay, a sevenfold measure of it. Elsewhere he cried, "According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Our sense of sin leads us to use similar language. Lord, I need much mercy, manifold mercy, multiplied mercy, I want mercy upon mercy; I want forgiving mercy, I want regenerating mercy, I want mercy for the present as well as for the past, and I shall want mercy to keep me in the future if I am to be saved at all. Friend, set your plea on that ground. Multiplied sins crave multiplied mercies. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord."

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing: "even *thy salvation*," not a salvation of my own invention, but "thy salvation." God's salvation is one in which his divine sovereignty is revealed, and that sovereignty must be accepted and adored. Do not dispute against God's salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. Receive the salvation which the Lord planned in eternity, which he wrought out on Calvary, and which he applies to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You need salvation from sinning as well as salvation from hell, and that the Lord will give you. You want salvation from self to God, and that, too, he will bestow. Ask for all that the Lord intends by his salvation and includes in it. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, even thy salvation."

You see, dear brethren, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even thy salvation *according to thy word*." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Dear hearer, where are you? Are you hidden away in the foggy corners? I wish I could get a hold of your hand, and speak as a brother to you. You do not want God to go out of the way of his word to save you: do you? You are willing to be saved in the Scriptural way, the Bible way. People nowadays will do anything but keep to the word of God, they will follow any book but the Bible. Now, do pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible's own way. Lord, if thy word says I must repent, give me thy salvation, and cause me to repent; if thy word says that I must confess my sin, give me thy salvation in the confession of sin; if thou sayest I must trust to Christ, Lord, help me now to trust him; only grant me thy salvation according to thy word.

Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is "Let thy salvation *come* also unto me." He owns his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy, he wants it to come to him. He

is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaister nor reach the medicine, and therefore he seeks the Lord to bring it to him. He is like the man half dead on the road to Jericho, and needs that one should pour in the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death.

"Let thy mercies come to me, O Lord." This implies that there is a barrier between him and the mercy; the road appears to be blocked up; the devil intervenes, and his fears hedge up the way, and he cries to God to clear the road. "Lord, let thy mercies come. Didst thou not say, Let there be light, and there was light? So let thy mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner, and I shall have it, Lord; but it must come to me by thy power. Lo, here I lie at hell's dark door, and feel within my spirit as if the sentence of condemnation were registered in heaven against me; but let thy mercies come also unto me, O God, even thy salvation according to thy word." That is a very gracious prayer.

In the second place this prayer *may be supported by gracious arguments.* May the Spirit of God help you to plead them. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, "Lord, let thy mercy come to me, for I need mercy." Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself. Whenever you say, "Lord, I am as good as other people; I try to do my best," and so on, you act as foolishly as if a beggar at your door should plead that he was not very badly off, not half so needy as others, and neither scantily fed nor badly clothed. This would be a new method of begging, and a very bad one. No, no; tell out your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, "O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs thy mercy more than I do: let my need plead with thee; give me thy salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner: let thy mercy and thy truth visit me in very deed." Your soul's wounds are not such as sham beggars make with chemicals: they are real sores; plead them with the God of all grace. Your poverty is not that which wears rags abroad and fine linen at home; you are utterly bankrupt, and this you may urge before the Lord as a reason for his mercy.

Next plead this: "Lord, thou knowest, and thou hast made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if thy mercy does not come to me: I must perish, I must perish miserably. I have heard the gospel, and have neglected it; I have been a Sabbath breaker, even when I thought I was a Sabbath keeper; I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang his praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite's lips. The hottest place in hell will surely be mine unless thy mercy come to me. Oh, send that mercy, now." This is good and prevalent pleading: hold on to it.

Then plead, "If thy mercy shall come to me it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come; but, oh, if thou dost ever blot out my sin I will tell the world of it; I will tell the angels of it: through eternity I will sing thy praises, and claim to be of all the saved ones the most remarkable instance of what thy sovereign grace can do. Do you feel like that, dear hearer? I used to think if the Lord saved *me* he would have begun on a new

ether, that his mercy would have sent up her song an octave
ıan before. In every man's case there will be a conviction
› is a something so special about his guilt that there will be
ʒ very special about the mercy which can put that guilt away.
n the peril of your soul, and the glory which grace will gain by
ıe. Plead the greatness of the grace needed, for Christ delights
ıt marvels, and his name is Wonderful. "Lord, pardon mine
for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody, and it will
ler indeed if thy grace shall visit me."

'ou can put this to the good Saviour. Tell him if he will give
ıalvation, he will not be impoverished by the gift. "Lord, I
rsty soul; but thou art such a river that if I drink from thee
be no fear of my exhausting thy boundless supply." They put
ertain little nasty, dirty ponds by the roadside, "No dogs may
d here." Pity the dogs if they were! But no one puts up
›tice on the banks of great, glorious Old Father Thames. You
ı your dogs if you like, and his flood will flow on; there is too
it to be so readily polluted. So is it with the boundless mercy
God permits many a poor dog of a sinner to be washed in it,
t is just as full and efficacious as ever. You need not be afraid
ng too much sunlight, for the sun loses nothing by your basking
ıms. So is it with divine mercy, it can visit you, and bless you,
in as great and glorious as ever. Out of the fulness of Christ
may still receive salvation, and he will remain the same over-
›untain of grace. Plead then, "Lord, if such a poor soul as I
saved, I shall be made supremely happy, but none of thine
ı or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious; thou wilt be as
l blessed a God as ever." You may even say, "Lord, now that
Jesus has died, it will not dishonour thee to save me. Before
ng sacrifice it might have stained thy justice to pass by sin;
the sacrifice is offered thou canst be just and yet the justifier.
›ne shall say thou art unjust if thou savest even me, now that
ırist has bled. Since thou thyself hast made my salvation
without infringement of thy law, I beseech thee fulfil the design
eat sacrifice, and save even me."

is another plea implied in the prayer, and a very sweet argu-
is—"Let thy mercies come *also* unto me, O Lord." It means:
come to so many before, therefore let it come also unto me.
I were the only one, and thou hadst never saved a sinner before,
d I venture upon thy word and promise. Especially I would
d trust the blood of Jesus: but, Lord, I am not the first by
illions. I beseech thee, then, of thy great love, let thy salva-
e unto me." You notice in the parable of the prodigal that the
eeder of swine was the only son that had gone astray, and con-
r the first that ever tried whether his father would receive him.
r brother had not gone astray, and was there at home, to grum-
ı younger brother; but the poor prodigal son, though he had no
before him of his father's willingness to forgive, was bold to try
his father's heart. None had trodden that way before, yet he
d to explore it. He felt that he should not be cast out. But when
ny of you say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," scores of us

are ready to leap out of our seats and cry, "Come along, brother, for have come, and the gracious Father has received us." I do not kn whether the elder brother is here to murmur at a penitent sinner; I a happy to say I have none of his spirit. It will make my heart happ the bells of my whole nature will ring for joy if I may only bring one my poor, prodigal brothers back to my great Father's house. Oh, con along with you, and let this be the plea: "Thou hast received so man O receive me." Cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." The Lo has not come to the end of his mercy yet. Jesus has not come to th end of his saving work yet. There is room for you, and there will l room for thousands upon thousands yet, until the Master of the hou hath risen up and shut to the door. He has not risen up, nor closed th door as yet, and still his mercy cries, "Come to me, come to me, come me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer, which have helped to back up with arguments, *will be answered by our gracio God*. Oh, be sure of this, he never sent his prophets to preach to us salvation which cannot be ours; he never sent his apostles to report t us concerning a mere dream; he never set the angels wondering at a empty speculation; he never gave his Son to be a ransom which wi not redeem; and he never committed his Spirit to witness to that whic after all will mock the sinner's need. No, he is able to save: there salvation, there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now. W are sitting in the light in this house while a dense fog causes darkne all around, even darkness which may be felt; this is an emblem of th state of those who are in Christ: they have light in their hearts, ligh in their habitations, light in Jesus Christ. O come to him and fin salvation now. May God bring any that have been in darkness int his marvellous light, and bring them now, and unto his name shall b praise for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 106, 807.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LILY AMONG THORNS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 29TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."—Solomon's Song ii. 2.

WE shall not enter into any profitless discussion this morning. We take it for granted that the Song of Solomon is a sacred marriage song between Christ and his church, and that it is the Lord Jesus who is here speaking of his church, and indeed of each individual member, saying, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." I will not even enter into any disquisition as to what particular flower is here intended by the word translated "lily," for it would be very difficult to select a plant from the Holy Land about which travellers and botanists would agree. The lily, which we should most naturally fix upon, is, as I have gathered from books of travel, not at present found in that country, though we may not therefore be sure that it was never there, or may not yet be discovered. Several other fair and beautiful forms, according to the fancies of various travellers, have been preferred to occupy the place of the plant intended by the original Hebrew, but none of them quite come up to the ideal suggested to an English reader by our translation. I will for once take the liberty to clothe the Scripture in a western dress, if need be, and venture to do what Solomon would surely have done if his Song of songs had been written in England. I shall assume that he means one of our own lilies: either the lily of the valley, or one of those more stately beauties, matchless for whiteness, which so gloriously adorn our gardens. Either will do, and serve our turn this morning. "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters." It is of small moment to be precise in botany so long as we get the spirit of the text. We seek practical usefulness and personal consolation, and proceed at once in the pursuit, in the hope that it may be with us as with the great Bridegroom himself, of whom the golden canticle saith, "He feedeth among the lilies."

Many are taking root among us now, newly transplanted from the world, and it is well that they should be rooted in a knowledge of their

because he first loved you. Doubt not the fact, but be well assured it, that love in your heart towards Jesus is the certain and infallib pledge of his infinite, eternal, and immutable love to you. If his nam is on *your* heart, then be sure of this, that your name is on *his* breas and written on the palms of his hands. You are espoused unto hin and the bands of the mystical wedlock shall never be snapped. This the first point of the relation of the church to her Lord: she is th object of his love.

Next, *she bears his likeness.* Notice the first verse of the chapte wherein the bridegroom speaks—"I am the rose of Sharon, and th lily of the valleys." He is the lily, but his beloved is like him; for h applies his own chosen emblem to her—"As the lily among thorns, so i my love among the daughters." Notice that he *is* the lily, she is *as* th lily, that is to say, *he* has the beauty and *she* reflects it; she is comel in his comeliness which he puts upon her. If any soul hath any suc beauty as is described here Christ has dowered that beloved soul with a its wealth of charms, for in ourselves we are deformed and defiled. Wha is the confession of this very spouse in the previous chapter? She say "I am black,"—that is the opposite of a lily; if she adds, "but comely," it is because her Lord has made her comely. There is no grace bu what grace has given, and if we are graceful it is because Christ ha made us full of grace. There is no beauty in any one of us but wha our Lord has wrought in us.

Note, too, that he who gave the beauty is the first to see it. Whil they are unknown to the world Jesus knows his own. Long befor anybody else sees any virtue or any praise in us, Jesus descries it, an is pleased therewith. He is quick to say, "Behold, he prayeth," o "Behold, he repenteth." He is the first to say, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Love's eyes are quick, and her ears ar open. Love covers a multitude of faults, but it discovers a multitude o beauties. Can it be so, O my soul, can it be so that Christ hath mad thee comely in his comeliness? Hath he shed a beauty upon thee, an does he himself look complacently upon it? He whose taste is ex- quisite, and whose voice is the truth, who never calls that beautiful which is not beautiful, can he see a beauty in thy sighs and tears, in thy desires after holiness, in thy poor attempts to aid his cause, in thy prayers and in thy songs, and in thy heart's love towards him,—can he see a beauty in these? Yes, assuredly he can, or he would not speak as he does in this text. Let his condescending discernment have all honour for this generous appreciation of us. Let us bless and love him because he deigns to think so highly of us who owe every thing to him. "Thou art," saith he, "my love, as the lily."

It is evident that the Lord Jesus takes delight in this beauty which he has put upon his people. He values it at so great a rate that he counts all rival beauties to be but as thorns. He looks upon the court of an earthly monarch, and sees my lords and ladies, but makes small account of them compared with his poor saints. If in that court he spies out one that loves him, one who wears a coronet and prays, he marks that one, and counts him or her "as the lily among thorns." There is a wealthy household, honoured and famous among the old county families, but in there is no lover of the Saviour except one, and she perhaps is a little

maid whose service is among the pots, yet shall she be as the wings of a dove covered with silver. "As the lily among thorns" shall she be. All the kingdoms of the earth are but thornbrakes to the Lord Jesus compared with his church. Be they Roman, German, French, or English, all empires, with all their splendours, are mere gorse and furze upon the common, bramble-bushes and thorn coverts, the haunts of wild and noxious creatures in the view of the King of kings; but his church, and those that make up the body of the faithful, are as lilies in his discerning eyes. He delights in them, he finds a sweet content in gazing on them.

So you see the Lord has given to his people his likeness, and that likeness he looks upon and loves.

Bringing out still further the relationship between Christ and his church, I want you to notice that *her position has drawn out his love*. "As the lily," saith he, "*among thorns*, so is my love." He spied her out among the thorns. She was at the first no better than a thorn herself; his grace alone made her to differ from the briars about her; but as soon as ever he had put his life and his grace into her, though she dwelt among the ungodly, she became as the lily, and he spied her out. The thornbrake could not hide his beloved. Christ's eye towards his people is so quick because it is cleared by love. There may at this time be in a Popish convent one truly seeking Jesus in spirit and in truth. He spies out the believer among the trusters in themselves, and calls her his love among thorns. There may be at this moment in the most godless haunt in London a poor, trembling heart that loves Jesus in secret: the Lord knows that heart, and it is to him as a lily among thorns. You, perhaps, are the only serious working man in the shop in which you earn your daily bread, and the whole band hold you in derision. You may hardly know yourself whether you are really a Christian, for you are sometimes staggered about your own condition; and yet the enemies of Christ have made up their minds as to whose you are, and treat you as one of the disciples of the Nazarene. Be of good courage, your Lord discerns you and knows you better than you know yourself. Such is the quickness of his eye that your difficult and perilous position only quickens his discernment, and he regards you with the more attention. The thorns cannot hide you, thickly as they cluster around you: in your loneliness you are not alone, for the Crucified is with you.

"As the lily among thorns" wears also another meaning. Dr. Thompson writes of a certain lily, "It grows among thorns, and I have sadly lacerated my hands in extricating it from them. Nothing can be in higher contrast than the luxuriant, velvety softness of this lily, and the withered, tangled hedge of thorns about it." Ah, beloved, you know who it was that in gathering your soul and mine, lacerated not his hand only, but his feet, and his head, and his side, and his heart, yea, and his inmost soul. He spied us out, and said, "Yonder lily is mine, and I will have it"; but the thorns were a terrible barrier; our sins had gathered round about us, and the wrath of God most sharply stopped the way. Jesus pressed through all, that we might be his; and now when he takes us to himself he does not forget the thorns which girded his brow, and tore his flesh, for our sakes. This then is a part of our relationship to Christ, that we cost him very dear. He saw us where we

were, and he came to our deliverance; and now, even as Phara daughter called the young child's name "Moses," "because," said "I drew him out of the water," so doth Jesus call his chosen "the among thorns," because such she was when he came to her res Never will he forget Calvary and its thorns, nor should his saints al the memory thereof to fade.

Yet once more I think many a child of God may regard himself still being a lily among thorns, because of his afflictions. Certainly church is so, and *she is thereby kept for Christ's own.* If thorns mad hard for him to reach us for our salvation, there is another kind thorn which makes it hard for any enemy to come at us for our h Our trials and tribulations, which we would fain escape from, often as a spiritual protection: they hedge us about and ward off many devouring foe. Sharp as they are, they serve as a fence and a defen Many a time, dear child of God, you would have been an exposed l to be plucked by any ruthless hand, if it had not been that God h placed you in such circumstances that you were shut up unto hims Sick saints and poor saints and persecuted saints are fair lilies enclo by their pains, and wants, and bonds that they may be for Christ alo I look on John Bunyan in prison writing his "Pilgrim's Progress," a I cannot help feeling that it was a great blessing for us all that suc lily was shut up among the thorns that it might shed its fragrance that famous book, and thereby perfume the church for ages. You t are kept from roaming by sickness or by family trials need not reg these things, for perhaps they are the means of making you more co pletely your Lord's. How charmingly Madame Guyon wrote when was immured in a dungeon. Her wing was closely bound, but her s was full of liberty, for she felt that the bolts and bars only shut her with her Beloved, and what is that but liberty? She sang:—

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air;
And in my cage I sit and sing
To him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth thee.

"Nought have I else to do,
I sing the whole day long;
And he whom most I love to please
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still he bends to hear me sing."

"As the lily among thorns," she lived in prison shut in with h Lord, and since the world was quite shut out, she was in that respec gainer. O to have one's heart made as "a garden enclosed, a spri shut up, a fountain sealed." So let my soul be, ay, so let it be even the enclosure can only be accomplished by a dense growth of trials a griefs. May every pain that comes and casts us on our bed, and lays aside from public usefulness; may every sorrow which arises out of c business, and weans us from the world; may every adversary t assails us with bitter, taunting words only thicken the thorn hed

which encases us from all the world, and constrains us to be chaste lilies set apart for the Well-beloved.

Enough upon this point, I think; only do let me entreat all of you who have lately come to know the Lord to think much of your relationship *to him*. It is the way by which you will be supported under the responsibilities of your relationship to the world. If you know that you are his, and that he loves you, you will be strong to bear all burdens; nothing will daunt you if you are sure that he is for you, that his whole heart is true to you, that he loves you specially, and has set you apart unto himself, that you may be one with him for ever. Dwell much, in your meditations, upon what this text and other Scriptures teach of the relationship of the renewed heart to Christ, and know him of whom you are so well known. May the Holy Spirit teach us all this lesson so that it may be learned by our hearts.

II. But now, secondly, our text is full of instruction as to THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH, AND EACH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER TO THE WORLD,—"The lily among thorns."

First, then, *she has incomparable beauty*. As compared and contrasted with all else she is as the lily to the thorn-brake. Did not our Lord say of the natural lilies—"Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"? and when I think of Christ's lilies, adorned in his own righteousness, and bearing his own image, I feel that I may repeat my Master's words and say with emphasis, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!" In Christ's esteem his church bears the bell for beauty; she is the fairest among women. She is not to be compared, she has to be contrasted with the rest of mankind. Our Lord means that if you take worldlings at their best and in their bravest attire, in their pomp, and glory, and parade, they are but as thorns in contrast with his church. Though the church may seem to be little, and poor, and despised, yet is she better than all the princes, and kingdoms, and glories of the earth. He means that true Christians are infinitely superior to ungodly men. These ungodly men may make a fair show of virtue, and they may have much prudence and wit, and count themselves wise and great, but Jesus calls all unconverted ones "thorns," while his own believing ones he compares to "lilies." The thorns are worthless, they flourish, and spread, and cumber the ground, but they yield no fruit, and only grow to be cut down for the oven. Alas, such is man by nature, at his best. As for the lily, it is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever; it lives shedding sweet perfume, and when it is gathered its loveliness adorns the chamber to which it is taken. So does the saint bless his generation while here, and when he is taken away he is regarded with pleasure even in heaven above as one of the flowers of God. He will ere long be transplanted from among the thorns to the garden enclosed beyond the river, where the King delights to dwell, for such a flower is far too fair to be left for ever amid tangled briars.

There are among worldly people some who are very fair to look upon in many respects: philanthropic, kind, and upright, they have many virtues; but since these virtues have no bearings towards God, and no reference to Christ, he counts the bearers of them to be but thorns. What virtue can there be in him whose principle in life is disregard of his Maker, and disbelief in his Saviour? He is an avowed rebel and yet

would be commended by the Lord whom he rejects. How can it b Acts done from other motives than those of obedience to God or lo to Christ are poor things. There may be a great inward differen between actions which outwardly are the same. The apple of natu hath never the flavour of the pomegranate of grace. It may see even to excel the fruit of grace, but it is not so. Two babes before may appear alike as they seem to sleep side by side, but the child nature, however finely dressed, is not the living child, and the Lord w not own the dead thing as belonging to his family. Ah, you that a struggling after holiness for Christ's sake, you that are seeking aft virtue in the power of the Holy Ghost, you have the beauty of the lil while all else are still to Christ but as a thicket of thorns.

Ay, and let me say, what I am sorry to add,—a real Christian is superior even to a professing Christian as a lily is to thorns. I kno churches in which there are many who make a profession, but, ah me, is a pity that they should, for their life does not adorn their doctrin their temper is not consistent with the indwelling of the Holy Spiri They live like worldlings, to amass money, or to carry on business, to enjoy good eating and drinking, or to dress and go to parties: the are as much for this world as if they were never renewed, and it is to b feared they never were. It will often grieve those who really love th Lord to see how mere professors pretend to do what saints labour t perform. Saints are mimicked, I had almost said mocked and mimicke by empty professors, and this is a standing source of sorrow. Their col words often vex the zealous heart and pierce it as with thorns. Whe you are full of zeal their want of consecration almost kindles indignatio in the minds of those who are willing to give their last penny, ay, an their last breath, for their Master's honour. Do not, however, be at a astonished, for it must be so; he who is full of the grace of God wi always be as the lily among thorns, even in the professing church. D not marvel, young brother, if older professors damp your ardour, an count your warm love to be a mere fanaticism. God give you grace t keep up your first love, and even to advance upon it, though the thorn ones wound and hinder you. May you be distinguished above you fellow-professors, for I fear that unless it be so your life will be a poo one.

This then is the relationship of the church to the world, and o Christians to the world, that they are as much superior to the unre generate in moral and spiritual beauty as the lily is to the thorns amon which it finds itself.

Secondly, in the comparison of the saint to the lily we remark that *h has, like the lily, a surpassing excellence.* I point not to its beauty just now but to its intrinsic excellence. The thorn is a fruit of the curse: it spring up because of sin. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unt thee." Not so the lily: it is a fair type of the blessing which maketh rich without the sorrow of carking care. The thorn is the mark of wrath and the lily is the symbol of divine providence. A true believer is a blessing, a tree whose leaves heal and whose fruit feeds. A genuine Christian is a living gospel, an embodiment of goodwill towards men Did not the old covenant blessing run, "In thee and in thy seed shall al nations of the earth be blessed"? I cannot refrain from quoting

metrical meditation of one who loved the Song of Solomon, and drank into its spirit. He says of the church. She is

> "A radiant thing, where all is gloomy else,
> Florescent where all else is barrenness;
> A blossom in the desert, that proclaims
> Man is no friendless outcast, hopeless doomed
> To traverse scenes of wickedness and grief,
> But, pilgrim as he is, has One who plans,
> Not only to protect but cheer his way.
> Oh, ever testifying desert flower,
> Still holding forth the story of God's love,
> How wonderful it is that busy throngs
> Pause not to look on thee! That few reflect
> On the strange fact of thine existence still,
> A lily among thorns—a life in death,
> Distinct from, yet in contact with, the world;
> Burning, yet unconsumed; though cumbered, free
> With glorious liberty!"

Yes, the church is a blessing, a blessing abiding and scattering its delights in the midst of the curse; and each particular believer is in his measure a blessing too, "as the lily among thorns."

A true Christian knows not how to harm his fellow men. He is like the lily which stings no one, and yet he lives among those who are full of sharpness. He aims to please, and not to provoke, and yet he lives among those whose existence is a standing menace. The thorn tears and lacerates: it is all armed from its root to its topmost branch, defying all comers. But there stands the lily, smiling, not defying; charming, and not harming. Such is the real Christian, holy, harmless, full of love and gentleness and tenderness. Therein lieth his excellence. The thorn pierces, but the lily soothes: the very sight of it gives pleasure. Who would not stop and turn aside to see a lily among thorns, and think he read a promise from his God to comfort him amid distress? Such is a true Christian: he is a consolation in his family, a comfort in his neighbourhood, an ornament to his profession, and a benediction to his age. He is all tenderness and gentleness, and yet it may be he lives among the envious, the malicious, and the profane, a lily among thorns. The thorn saith, "Keep away; no one shall touch me with impunity." The lily cries, "I come to you, I shed my soul abroad to please you." The sweet odours of the lily of the valley are well known; perhaps no plant has so strong a savour about it of intense and exquisite sweetness as that lily of the valley which is found in Palestine. Such is the sanctified believer. There is a secret something about him, a hallowed savour which goeth out from his life, so that his graciousness is discovered; for grace, like its Lord, "cannot be hid." Even if the regenerate man be not known as a professor, yet doth he discover himself by the holiness of his life, "his speech bewrayeth him." When I was resting in the south I wandered by the side of a flowing stream, gathering handfuls of maiden-hair fern from the verdant bank—and as I walked along I was conscious of a most delicious fragrance all around me. I cast my eye downward, and I saw blue eyes looking up from among the grass at my feet. The violets had hidden themselves from sight, but they had betrayed themselves by their delicious scent.

So doth a Christian reveal his hidden life; his tone and temper and manners bespeak his royal lineage, if indeed the Spirit of God be in him. Such are the people of God; they court no observation, but are like that modest flower of which the poet says:—

> "She ne'er affects
> The public walk, nor gaze of midday sun;
> She to no state nor dignity aspires,
> But silent and alone puts on her suit,
> And sheds a lasting perfume, but for which
> We had not known there was a thing so sweet
> Hid in the gloomy shade."

I want you, dear Christian people, to be just like this: to have about you a surpassing wealth of blessing, and an unrivalled sweetness of influence by which you shall be known of all men. Is it so with you, or are you as rough, and stern, and repellant as a thorn bush? Are you as selfish and as quarrelsome as the unregenerate? Or do you shed yourself away in sweet odours of self-denying kindness in your families, and among your neighbours? If you do so, then doth Jesus say of you, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

The last point with regard to our relationship to the world is that the church and many individual Christians are called to endure *singular trials*, which make them feel "as the lily among thorns." That lovely flower seems out of place in such company, does it not? Christ said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among *sheep*—no, no, that is my mistake, "as sheep among *wolves*." It is a very blessed thing to be as sheep among sheep: to lie down with them under the shadow of the great rock, and feed with them in green pastures under the Shepherd's eye. This is our privilege, and we ought to value it greatly, and unite with the church and frequent its ordinances; but even then we shall, some of us, have to go home to an ungodly family, or to go out into the world to win our bread, and then we shall be as sheep among wolves. Grow in the church and you will be lilies in the garden; still, you cannot always live in the Tabernacle, and so you will have to go back to the ungodly world, and there you will be lilies among thorns.

The lily startles you if you find it in such a position. Often you come upon one of God's elect ones in a most unexpected manner, and are as much amazed as if an angel crossed your path. This is the wonder of the lily among thorns. You are making your way over a wild heath and come to a tangled thorn-brake through which you must force your way. As you are driving through the dense mass, rending and tearing your garments, suddenly you stand still as one who has seen a vision of angels, for there among the most rugged brambles a lily lifts its lovely form and smiles upon you. You feel like Moses at the back of the desert when he saw the bush which burned with fire and yet was not consumed. So have you met in a back slum, where blasphemy abounded, a beauteous child of God, whom all recognized as such, and you have felt amazed. So have you in a wealthy family full of worldliness and vanity come upon a humble man or patient woman living unto Christ, and you have asked, how came this grace to this house? So, too, in a foreign land, where all bowed down to crucifix and image, you have casually met with a confessor who has stood his ground among idolaters, protesting for

his God, not by his speech so much as by his holy walk. The surprise has been great. Expect many such surprises. The Lord has a people where you look not for them. Think not that all his lilies are in his garden, there are lilies among thorns, and he knows their whereabouts.

Many saints reside in families where they will never be appreciated any more than the lily is appreciated by the thorns. This is painful, for the sympathy of our fellows is a great comfort. Lilies of the valley love to grow in clusters, and saints love holy company, and yet in some cases it must not be; they must live alone. Nor need we think that this loneliness is unrelieved, for God goeth out of the track of men, and he visits those whom his own servants are passing by. The poet saith—

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

But the poet forgot that God is in the wilderness, and the solitary place, and the sweetness of lonely flowers is his. He who planted the lily among thorns sees its beauty. It is God's flower, and does it waste its sweetness because no human nostril smells thereat? It were blasphemous to count that wasted which is reserved for the great King. The Lord understandeth the incense of nature better than we do, and as he walks abroad he rejoices in his works. Grace struggling in loneliness is very choice in God's esteem. If man sees thee not, O lonely believer, thou mayest nevertheless sing, "Thou God seest me." The flower which blooms for God alone has a special honour put upon it, and so hath the saint whose quiet life is all for Jesus. If you are unappreciated by those around you, do not therefore be distressed, for you are honourable in the sight of God.

The lily is altogether unassisted too by its surroundings,—"the lily among thorns" borrows nothing from the growth which gathers about it. A genuine Christian is quite unhelped by ungodly men; what is worse, he is cumbered by them. Yet through divine grace he lives and grows. You know how the good seed could not grow because of the thorns which sprang up and choked it, but here is a good seed, a choice bulb, which flourishes where you could not have looked for it to do so. God can make his people live and blossom even among the thorns, where the ungodly by their evil influences would choke and destroy it. Happy it is when the gracious one can overtop the thorn-thicket, which would check his growth, and make his influence to be known and felt above the grossness of surrounding sin.

We should not do justice to this text if we failed to see in it a reminder of the persecution to which many of the best of God's people are subjected. They live all their lives long like the lily among thorns. Some of you, dear friends, are in this condition. You can hardly speak a word but what it is picked up and made mischief of; you cannot perform an action but what it is twisted, and motives imputed to you which you know not of. Nowadays persecutors cannot drag men to the stake, but the old trial of cruel mockings is still continued; in some cases it rages even more fiercely than ever. God's people have been a persecuted people in all times, and you only fare as they fare. Bear well the burden common to all the chosen! Make no great wonder of it; this bitter trial has happened to many more before;

and you may well rejoice that you are now in fellowship with apostles and prophets and honourable men of all ages. The lily among thorns should rejoice that it is a lily and not a thorn, and when it is wounded it should consider it a matter of course, and bloom on.

But why doth the Lord put his lilies among thorns? It is because he works transformations, singular transformations, by their means. He can make a lily grow among thorns till the thorns grow into lilies. Remember how it is written, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." He can set a Christian in a godless family till first one and then another shall feel the divine power, and shall say, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you." It cannot happen in nature, but it does happen in grace perpetually, that the sweet perfume of the lily believer, shed abroad upon the thorn-brake of the ungodly, turns it into a lily-garden. Such holy work among ungodly people is the truest and best "FLOWER MISSION." They do well who give flowers to cheer the poor in their dreary habitations, but they do better still who are themselves flowers in the places where they live. Be lilies, my dear brethren, preach by your actions, preach by your kindness, and by your love; and I feel quite sure that your influence will be a power for good. If the Holy Spirit helps all of you to stand among your associates as lilies among the thorns, the day will come when thorns will die out, and lilies will spring up on every side: sin will be banished, and grace will abound. An Australian gentleman told me yesterday that in his colony the arum lily abounds as much as weeds do with us. When will this happen spiritually on our side the globe? Ah, when! Blessed Lord, when wilt thou remove the curse? When wilt thou bring the better days? These are ill times, wherein the thorns grow thicker and more sharp than ever; protect thy lilies, increase their number, preserve their snowy whiteness, and delight thyself in them; for Jesus' sake, Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63, 123, 753.

Nightingale-lane, Balham,
March 2.

DEAR READERS,—Having purchased and paid for the ground for the Girls' Orphanage, I am now anxious to proceed with the undertaking. The first block of buildings will consist of the houses for 250 girls, with schools above them. I have not yet obtained a contract, but I have reason to believe that the works, with drainage, &c., will cost £8,000. Of this I have promises to the amount of £3,000. I now commit this new enterprise to the guardian care of the Lord of heaven and earth, hoping that he will so prosper it that the first stone may be laid on my birthday, June 19th.

Yours for the Orphans' sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FAIR PORTRAIT OF A SAINT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 7TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."—Job xxiii. 11, 12.

THUS Job speaks of himself, not by way of vaunting, but by way of vindication. Eliphaz the Temanite and his two companions had brought distinct charges against Job's character: because they saw him in such utter misery they concluded that his adversity must have been sent as a punishment for his sin, and therefore they judged him to be a hypocrite, who under cover of religion had exercised oppression and tyranny. Zophar had hinted that wickedness was sweet in Job's mouth, and that he hid iniquity under his tongue. Eliphaz charged him with hardness of heart to the poor, and dared to say, "Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing." This last from its very impossibility was meant to show the extreme meanness to which he falsely imagined that Job must have descended—how could he strip the naked? He was evidently firing at random. As neither he nor his companions could discover any palpable blot in Job upon which they could distinctly lay their finger, they bespattered him right and left with their groundless accusations. They made up in venom for the want of evidence to back their charges. They felt sure that there must be some great sin in him to have procured such extraordinary afflictions, and therefore by smiting him all over they hoped to touch the sore place. Let them stand as a warning to us never to judge men by their circumstances, and never to conclude that a man must be wicked because he has fallen from riches to poverty.

Job, however, knew his innocence, and he was determined not to give way to them. He said, "Ye are forgers of lies, physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom." He fought the battle right manfully; not, perhaps, without a little display of temper and self-righteousness, but still with much less of either than any of us would have shown had we been in the same plight, and had we been equally conscious of perfect integrity. He has in this part of his self-defence sketched a fine picture of a man perfect and upright before God. He has set before us the image to which we should

seek to be conformed. Here is the high ideal after which every Christian man should strive; and happy shall he be who shall attain to it. Blessed is he who in the hour of his distress, if he be falsely accused, will be able to say with as much truth as the patriarch could, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

I ask you, first, to inspect the picture of *Job's holy life*, that you may make it your model. After we have done this, we will look a little below the surface, asking the question, "How was he enabled to lead such an admirable life as this? Upon what meat did this great patriarch feed that he had grown so eminent?" We shall find the answer in our second head, *Job's holy sustenance*—"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." May he, who wrought in Job his patience and integrity, by this our meditation teach us the like virtues by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I. Let us sit down before this sketch of JOB'S HOLY LIFE: it will well repay a meditative study.

Note, first, that *Job had been all along a man fearing God and walking after the divine rule.* In the words before us he dwells much upon the things of God—"his steps," "his way," "the commandment of his lips," "the words of his mouth." He was pre-eminently one that "feared God and eschewed evil." He knew God to be the Lord, and worthy to be served, and therefore he lived in obedience to his law, which was written upon his instructed conscience. His way was God's way; he chose that course which the Lord commanded. He did not seek his own pleasure, nor the carrying out of his own will: neither did he follow the fashion of the times, nor conform himself to the ruling opinion or custom of the age in which he lived: fashion and custom were nothing to him, he knew no rule but the will of the Almighty. Like some tall cliff which breasts the flood, he stood out almost alone, a witness for God in an idolatrous world. He owned the living God, and lived "as seeing him who is invisible." God's will had taken the helm of the vessel, and the ship was steered in God's course according to the divine compass of infallible justice and the unerring chart of the divine will. This is a great point to begin with; it is, indeed, the only sure basis of a noble character. Ask the man who seeks to be the architect of a great and honourable character this question—Where do you place God? Is he second with you? Ah, then, in the judgment of those whose view comprehends all human relationships you will lead a very secondary kind of life, for the first and most urgent obligation of your being will be disregarded. But is God first with you? Is this your determination, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? Do you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? If so, you are laying the foundation for a whole or holy character, for you begin by acknowledging your highest responsibility. In this respect you will find that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Whether the way be rough or smooth, uphill or down dale, through green pastures or burning deserts, let God's way be your way. Where the fiery cloudy pillar of his providence leads be sure to follow, and where his holy statutes command, there promptly go. Ask the Lord to let you hear his Spirit speak like a voice behind you saying,

"This is the way, walk ye in it." As soon as you see from the Scriptures, or from conscience, or from providence, what the will of the Lord is, make haste and delay not to keep his commandments. Set the Lord always before you. Have respect unto his statutes at all times, and in all your ways acknowledge him. No man will be able to look back upon his life with complacency unless God has been sitting upon the throne of his heart and ruling all his thoughts, aims, and actions. Unless he can say with David, "My soul hath kept thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly," he will find much to weep over and little with which to answer his accusers.

We must follow the Lord's way, or our end will be destruction; we must take hold upon Christ's steps, or our feet will soon be in slippery places; we must reverence God's words, or our own words will be idle and full of vanity; and we must keep God's commands, or we shall be destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. I set not forth obedience to the law as the way of salvation; but I speak to those who profess to be saved already by faith in Christ Jesus, and I remind all of you who are numbered with the company of believers that if you are Christ's disciples you will bring forth the fruits of holiness, and if you are God's children you will be like your Father. Godliness breeds God-likeness. The fear of God leads to imitation of God, and where this is not so, the root of the matter is lacking. The scriptural rule is "by their fruits ye shall know them," and by this we must examine ourselves.

Let us now consider Job's first sentence. He says: "*My foot hath held his steps.*" This expression sets forth great carefulness. He had watched every step of God, that is to say, he had been minute as to particulars, observing each precept, which he looked upon as being a footprint which the Lord had made for him to set his foot in; observing, also, each detail of the great example of his God; for in so far as God is imitable he is the great example of his people, as he saith—"Be ye holy, for I am holy": and again, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Job had observed the steps of God's justice, that he might be just; the steps of God's mercy, that he might be pitiful and compassionate; the steps of God's bounty, that he might never be guilty of churlishness or want of liberality; and the steps of God's truth, that he might never deceive. He had watched God's steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries; and God's steps of benevolence, that he might also do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. In consequence of this he became eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

"My foot," he saith, "hath held his steps": he means that he had laboured to be exact in his obedience towards God, and in his imitation of the divine character. Beloved, we shall do well if we are to the minutest point hourly observant of the precepts and example of God in all things. We must follow not only the right road, but his footprints in that road. We are to be obedient to our heavenly Father not only in some things, but in all things: not in some place but in all places,

abroad and at home, in business and in devotion, in the words of our lips and in the thoughts of our hearts. There is no holy walking without careful watching. Depend upon it, no man was ever good by chance, nor did anyone ever become like the Lord Jesus by a happy accident. "I put gold into the furnace," said Aaron, "and there came out this calf," but nobody believed him. If the image was like a calf it was because he had shaped it with a graving tool; and if it is not to be believed that metal will of itself take the form of a calf, much less will character assume the likeness of God himself, as we see it in the Lord Jesus. The pattern is too rich and rare, too elaborate and perfect, ever to be reproduced by a careless, half-awakened trifler. No, we must give all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength to this business, and watch every step, or else our walk will not be close with God, nor pleasing in his sight. O to be able to say, "My foot hath held his steps."

Notice here that the expression has something in it of tenacity, he speaks of taking hold upon God's steps. The idea needs to be lit up by the illustration contained in the original expression. You must go to mountainous regions to understand it. In very rough ways a person may walk all the better for having no shoes to his feet. I sometimes pitied the women of Mentone coming down the rough places of the mountains barefooted, carrying heavy loads upon their heads, but I ceased to pity them when I observed that most of them had a capital pair of shoes in the basket at the top; and I perceived as I watched them that they could stand where I slipped, because their feet took hold upon the rock, almost like another pair of hands. Barefooted they could safely stand, and readily climb where feet encased after our fashion would never carry them. Many Orientals have a power of grasp in their feet which we appear to have lost from want of use. An Arab in taking a determined stand actually seems to grasp the ground with his toes. Roberts tells us in his well-known "Illustrations" that Easterns, instead of stooping to pick up things from the ground with their fingers, will take them up with their toes; and he tells of a criminal condemned to be beheaded, who, in order to stand firm when about to die, grasped a shrub with his foot. Job declares that he took hold of God's steps, and thus secured a firm footing. He had a hearty grip of holiness, even as David said, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." That eminent scholar Dr. Good renders the passage, "in his steps will I *rivet* my feet." He would set them as fast in the footprints of truth and righteousness as if they were riveted there, so firm was his grip upon that holy way which his heart had chosen. This is exactly what we need to do with regard to holiness: we must feel about for it with a sensitive conscience, to know where it is, and when we know it we must seize upon it eagerly, and hold to it as for our life. The way of holiness is often craggy, and Satan tries to make it very slippery, and unless we can take hold of God's steps we shall soon slip with our feet, and bring grievous injury upon ourselves, and dishonour to his holy name. Beloved, to make up a holy character there must be a tenacious adherence to integrity and piety. You must not be one that can be blown off his feet by the hope of a little gain, or by the threatening breath of an ungodly man: you must stand fast and stand firm, and against all pressure and blandishment you must seize and grasp the precepts of the Lord, and abide in them,

riveted to them. Standfast is one of the best soldiers in the Prince Immanuel's army and one of the most fit to be trusted with the colours of his regiment. "Having done all, still stand."

To make a holy character we must take hold of the steps of God in the sense of promptness and speed. Here again I must take you to the East to get the illustration. They say of a man who closely imitates his religious teacher, "his feet have laid hold of his master's steps," meaning that he so closely follows his teacher that he seems to take hold of his heels. This is a blessed thing indeed, when grace enables us to follow our Lord closely. There is his foot, and close behind it is ours; and there again he takes another step, and we plant our feet where he has planted his. A very beautiful motto is hung up in our infant class-room at the Stockwell Orphanage, "*What would Jesus do?*" Not only may children take it as their guide, but all of us may do the same, whatever our age. "What would Jesus do?" If you desire to know what you ought to do under any circumstances, imagine Jesus to be in that position, and then think, "What would Jesus do? for what Jesus would do that ought I to do." In following Jesus we are following God, for in Christ Jesus the brightness of the Father's glory is best seen. Our example is our Lord and Master, Jesus the Son of God, and therefore this question is but a beam from our guiding star. Ask in all cases—"What would Jesus do?" That unties the knot of all moral difficulty in the most practical way, and does it so simply that no great wit or wisdom will be needed. May God's Holy Spirit help us to copy the line which Jesus has written, even as scholars imitate their writing master in each stroke, and line, and mark, and dot. Oh, when we come to die, and have to look back upon our lives, it will be a blessed thing to have followed the Lord fully. They are happy who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Blessed are they in life and death of whom it can be said,—as he was so were they also in this world. Though misunderstood and misrepresented, yet they were honest imitators of their Lord. Such a true-hearted Christian can say, "He knoweth the way that I take. He tried me, and I came forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps." Many a sorrow will you avoid if you keep close at your Master's heel. You know what came of Peter's following afar off; try what will come of close walking with Jesus. Abide in him, and let his words abide in you, so shall you be his disciples. You dare not trust in your works, and will not think of doing so, yet will you bless God that, being saved by his grace, you were enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, by a close and exact following of the steps of your Lord.

Three things, then, we get in the first sentence,—an exactness of obedience, a tenacity of grip upon that which is good, and a promptness in endeavouring to keep touch with God, and to follow him in all respects. May these things be in us and abound.

We now pass on to the second sentence. I am afraid you will say, "Spare us, for even unto the first sentence we have not yet attained." Labour after it then, beloved; forgetting the things that are behind except to weep over them, press forward to that which is before. May God give you those sensitive grasping feet which we have tried to describe: feet that take hold on the Lord's way, and may you throughout

life keep that hold; for "blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

The next sentence runneth thus: "*His way have I kept*"; that is to say, Job had adhered to God's way as the rule of his life. When he knew that such-and-such a thing was the mind of God, either by his conscience telling him that it was right, or by a divine revelation, then he obeyed the intimation and kept to it. He did not go out of God's way to indulge his own fancies, or to follow some supposed leader: to God's way he kept from his youth, even till the time when the Lord himself said of him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" The Lord gave him this character to the devil, who could not deny it, and did not attempt to do so, but only muttered, "Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" When he uttered our text Job could have replied to the malicious accuser that, even when God had broken down his hedges and laid him waste, he had not sinned nor charged God foolishly. He heeded not his wife's rash counsels to curse God and die, but he still blessed the divine name even though everything was taken from him. What noble words are those: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Though bereft of all earthly comfort, he did not forsake the way of holiness, but still kept to his God.

Keeping to the way signifies not simply adherence, but continuance and progress in it. Job had gone on in the ways of God year after year. He had not grown tired of holiness, nor weary of devotion, neither had he grown sick of what men call straight-laced piety. He had kept the way of God on, and on, and on, delighting in what Coverdale's version calls God's "high street"—the highway of holiness. The further he went the more pleasure he took in it, and the more easy he found it to his feet, for God was with him and kept him, and so he kept God's way. "Thy way have I kept." He means that notwithstanding there were difficulties in the way he persevered in it. It was stormy weather, but Job kept to the old road; the sleet beat in his face, but he kept his way: he had gone that path in fair weather, and he was not going to forsake his God now that the storms were out; and so he kept his way. Then the scene changed, the sun was warm, and all the air was redolent with perfume, and merry with the song of birds, but Job kept his way. If God's providence flooded his sky with sunshine he did not forsake God because of prosperity, as some do, but kept his way—kept his way when it was rough, kept his way when it was smooth. When he met with adversities he did not turn into a bye-road, but travelled the King's highway, where a man is safest, for those who dare to assail him will have to answer for it to a higher power. The high street of holiness is safe because the King's guarantee is given that "no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." The righteous shall hold on his way, and so did Job, come fair, come foul. When there were others in the road with him, and when there were none, he kept his way. He would not even turn aside for those three good men, or men who thought themselves good, who sat by the wayside and miserably comforted, that is to say, tormented him; he kept God's way, as one

whose mind is made up and whose face is set like a flint. There was no turning him, he would fight his way if he could not have it peaceably. I like a man whose mind is set upon being right with God, a self-contained man by God's grace, who does not want patting on the back and encouraging, and who on the other hand does not care if he is frowned at, but has counted the cost and abides by it. Give me a man who has a backbone; a brave fellow who has grit in him. It is well for a professor when God has put some soul into him, and made a man of him, for if a Christian man is not a man as well as a Christian, he will not long remain a Christian man. Job was firm: a well-made character that did not shrink in the wetting. He believed his God, he knew God's way, and he kept to it under all circumstances from his first start in life even until that day when he sat on a dunghill and transformed it into a throne, whereon he reigned as among all mere men, the peerless prince of patience. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and of this as one part of it, that he kept the way of the Lord.

Now, dear brethren, on this second clause let me utter this word of self-examination. Have we kept God's way? Have we got into it and do we mean to keep it still? Some are soon hot and soon cold; some set out for the New Jerusalem like Pliable, very eagerly, but the first slough of despond they tumble into shakes their resolution, and they crawl out on the homeward side and go back to the world again. There will be no comfort in such temporary religion, but dreadful misery when we come to consider it on a dying bed. Changeful Pliables will find it hard to die. O to be constant even to the end, so as to say, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept." God grant us grace to do it, by his Spirit abiding in us.

The third clause is, "*And not declined*," by which I understand that he had not declined *from* the way of holiness, nor declined *in* the way. First, he had not declined from it. He had not turned to the right hand nor to the left. Some turn away from God's way to the right hand by doing more than God's word has bidden them do; such as invent religious ceremonies, and vows, and bonds, and become superstitious, falling under the bondage of priestcraft, and being led into will-worship, and things that are not Scriptural. This is as truly wandering as going out of the road to the left would be. Ah, dear friends, keep to the simplicity of the Bible. This is an age in which Holy Scripture is very little accounted of. If a church chooses to invent a ceremony, men fall into it, and practise it as if it were God's ordinance. Ay, and if neither church nor law recognise the performance, yet if certain self-willed priests choose to burn candles, and to wear all sorts of bedizenments, and bow, and cringe, and march in procession, there are plenty of simpletons who will go whichever way their clergyman chooses, even if he should lead them into downright heathenism. "Follow my leader" is the game of the day, but "Follow my God" is the motto of a true Christian. Job had not turned to the right.

Nor had he turned to the left. He had not been lax in observing God's commandments. He had shunned omission as well as commission. This is a very heart-searching matter; for how many there are whose greatest sins lie in omission. And remember, sins of omission, though they sit very light on many consciences, and though the bulk of professors

do not even think them sins, are the very sins for which men will be condemned at the last. How do I prove that? What said the great Judge? "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." It was what they did not do that cursed them, more than what they did do. So look ye well to it, and pray God that you may not decline from the way of his precepts, from Jesus who, himself, is the one and only way.

Furthermore, I take it Job means that he had not even declined *in* that way. He did not begin with running hard and then get out of breath, and sit by the wayside and say, "Rest and be thankful;" but he kept up the pace, and did not decline. If he was warm and zealous once he remained warm and zealous; if he was indefatigable in service, he did not gradually tone down into a sluggard, but he could say, "I have not declined." Whereas we ought to make advances towards heaven, there are many who are, after twenty years profession, no forwarder than they were, but perhaps in a worse state. Oh, beware of a decline. We were accustomed to use that term years ago to signify the commencement of a consumption, or perhaps the effects of it; and indeed, a decline in the soul often leads on to a deadly consumption. In a spiritual consumption the very life of religion seems to ebb out by little and little. The man does not die by a wound that stabs his reputation, but by a secret weakness within him, which eats at the vitals of godliness and leaves the outward surface fair. God save us from declining. I am sure, dear friends, we cannot many of us afford to decline much, for we are none too earnest, none too much alive now; but this is one of the great faults of churches, so many of the members are in a decline that the church becomes a hospital instead of a barracks. Many professors are not what they were at first: they were very promising young men, but they are not performing old men. We are pleased to see the flowers on our fruit-trees, but they disappoint us unless they knit into fruit, and we are not satisfied even then unless the fruit ripens to a mellow sweetness. We do not make orchards for the sake of blossoms, we want apples. So is it with the garden of grace, our Lord comes seeking fruit, and instead thereof he often finds nothing but leaves. May God grant to us that we may not decline from the highest standard we have ever reached. "I would," said the Lord of the church of Laodicea, "that thou wert either cold or hot." Oh, you lukewarm ones take that warning to heart. Remember, Jesus cannot endure you; he will spue you out of his mouth; you make him sick to think of you. If you were downright cold he would understand you; if you were hot he would delight in you; but being neither cold nor hot he is sick at the thought of you, he cannot endure you; and indeed, when we think of what the Lord has done for us, it is enough to make us sick to think that any one should drag on in a cold, inanimate manner in his service, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Some decline because they become poor: they even stay from worship on that account. I hope none of you say, "I do not like to come to the Tabernacle because I have not fit clothes to come in." As I have often said, any clothes are fit for a man to come here in if he has paid for them. Let each come by all manner of means in such garments as he has, and he shall be welcome. But I do know some very poor professors

who, in the extremity of their anxiety and trouble, instead of flying to God, fly from him. This is very sad. The poorer you are, the more you want the rich consolations of grace. Do not let this temptation overcome you, but if you are as poor as Job, be as resolved as he to keep to the Lord's way and not decline. Others fly from their religion because they grow rich. They say that three generations never will come on wheels to a dissenting place of worship, and it has proved to be sadly true in many instances, though I have no cause to complain of you as yet. Some persons when they rise in the world turn up their noses at their poor friends. If any of you do so you will be worthy of pity, if not of contempt. If you forsake the ways of God for the fashion of the world you will be poor gainers by your wealth. The Lord keep you from such a decline. Many decline because they conform to the fashion of the world, and the way of the world is not the way of God. Doth not James say, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Others wander because they get into ill company, among witty people, or clever people, or hospitable people, who are not gracious people. Such society is dangerous. People whom we esteem, but whom God does not esteem, are a great snare. It is very perilous to love those who love not God. He shall not be my bosom friend who is not God's friend, for I shall probably do him but little service, and he will do me much harm. May the grace of God prevent your growing cold from any of these causes, and may you be able to say, "I have not declined."

One more sentence remains: "*Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips*": that is to say, as he had not slackened his pace, so much less had he turned back. May none of you ever go back. This is the most cutting grief of a pastor, that certain persons come in among us, and even come to the front, who after awhile turn back and walk no more with us. We know, as John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us"; yet what anguish it causes when we see apostates among us and know their doom. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Let Lot's wife be a warning. Season your souls with a fragment of salt from that pillar, and it may keep you from corruption.

Remember that you can turn back, not only from all the commandments, and so become an utter apostate, but there is such a thing as backing at single commandments. You know the precept to be right, but you cannot face it; you look at it, and look at it, and look at it, and then go back, back, back from it, refusing to obey. Job had never done so. If it was God's command he went forward to perform it. It may be that it seems impossible to go forward in the path of duty, but if you have faith you are to go on whatever the difficulty may be. The negro was right who said, "Massa, if God say, 'Sam, jump through the wall'; it is Sam's business to jump, and God's work to make me go through the wall." Leap at it, dear friends, even if it seem to be a wall of granite. God will clear the road. By faith

the Israelites went through the Red Sea as on dry land. It is ours to do what God bids us, as he bids us, when he bids us, and no hurt can come of it. Strength equal to our day shall be given, only let us cry "Forward!" and push on.

Here just one other word. Let us take heed to ourselves that we do not go back, for going back is dangerous. We have no armour for our back, no promise of protection in retreat. Going back is ignoble and base. To have had a grand idea and then to turn back from it like a whipped cur, is disgraceful. Shame on the man who dares not be a Christian. Even sinners and ungodly men point at the man who put his hand to the plough and looked back, and was not worthy of the kingdom. Indeed, it is fatal; for the Lord has said, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Forward! Forward! though death and hell obstruct the way, for backward is defeat, destruction, despair. O God, grant us of thy grace that when we come to the end of life we may say with joy, "I have not gone back from thy commandment." The covenant promises persevering grace, and it shall be yours, only look ye well that ye trifle not with this grace.

There is the picture which Job has sketched. Hang it up on the wall of your memory, and God help you to paint after this old master, whose skill is unrivalled.

II. Secondly, let us take a peep behind the wall to see how Job came by this character. Here we note JOB'S HOLY SUSTENANCE, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

First, then, *God spoke to Job.* Did God ever speak to you? I do not suppose Job had a single page of inspired writing. Probably he had not even seen the first books of Moses; he may have done so, but probably he had not. God spoke to him. Did he ever speak to you? No man will ever serve God aright unless God has spoken to him. You have the Bible, and God speaks in that book and through it; but mind you do not rest in the printed letter without discerning its spirit. You must try to hear God's voice in the printed letter. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"; but oh, pray that this divine Son may speak by the Holy Ghost right into your heart. Anything which keeps you from personal contact with Jesus robs you of the best blessing. The Romanist says he uses a crucifix to help him to remember Christ, and then his prayers often stop at the crucifix, and do not get to Christ; and in like manner you can make an idol of your Bible by using the mere words as a substitute for God's voice to you. The book is to help you to remember God, but if you stick in the mere letter, and get not to God at all, you misuse the sacred word. When the Spirit of God speaks a text right into the soul, when God himself takes the promise or the precept and sends it with living energy into the heart, this is that which makes a man have a reverence for the word: he feels its awful majesty, its divine supremacy, and while he trembles at it he rejoices, and goes forward to obey because God has spoken to him. Dear friends, when God speaks be sure that you have open ears to hear, for oftentimes he speaketh and men regard him not. In a vision of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men God has spoken to his prophets, but now he speaks by his word, applying it to the heart with power by his Spirit. If God speaks but little to us it is because we are dull of hearing. Renewed hearts are

never long without a whisper from the Lord. He is not a dumb God, nor is he so far away that we cannot hear him: they that keep his ways and hold his steps, as Job did, shall hear many of his words to their soul's delight and profit. God's having spoken to Job was the secret of his consistently holy life.

Then note, that *what God had spoken to him he treasured up.* He says in the Hebrew that he had hid God's word more than ever he had hidden his necessary food. They had to hide grain away in those days to guard it from wandering Arabs. Job had been more careful to store up God's word than to store up his wheat and his barley; more anxious to preserve the memory of what God had spoken than to garner his harvests. Do you treasure up what God has spoken? Do you study the Word? Do you read it? Oh, how little do we search it compared with what we ought to do. Do you meditate on it? Do you suck out its secret sweets? Do you store up its essence as bees gather the life-blood of flowers, and hoard up their honey for winter food? Bible study is the metal that makes a Christian; this is the strong meat on which holy men are nourished; this is that which makes the bone and sinew of men who keep God's way in defiance of every adversary. God spake to Job, and Job treasured up his words.

We learn from our version of the text that *Job lived on God's word:* he reckoned it to be better to him than his necessary food. He ate it. This is an art which some do not understand—eating the word of the Lord. Some look at the surface of the Scriptures, some pull the Scriptures to pieces without mercy, some cut the heavenly bread into dice pieces, and show their cleverness, some pick it over for plums, like children with a cake; but blessed is he that makes it his meat and drink. He takes the word of God to be what is, namely, a word from the mouth of the Eternal, and he says, "God is speaking to me in this, and I will satisfy my soul upon it; I do not want anything better than this, anything truer than this, anything safer than this, but having got this it shall abide in me, in my heart, in the very bowels of my life, it shall be interwoven with the warp and woof of my being.

But the text adds that he esteemed it more than his *necessary* food. Not more than dainties only, for those are superfluities, but more than his necessary food, and you know that a man's necessary food is a thing which he esteems very highly. He must have it. What, take away my bread? says he, as if this could not be borne. To take the bread out of a poor man's mouth is looked upon as the highest kind of villainy: but Job would sooner that they took the bread out of his mouth than the word of God out of his heart. He thought more of it than of his needful food, and I suppose it was because meat would only sustain his body, but the word of God feeds the soul. The nourishment given by bread is soon gone, but the nourishment given by the word of God abideth in us, and makes us to live for ever. The natural life is more than meat, but our spiritual life feeds on meat even nobler than itself, for it feeds on the bread of heaven, the person of the Lord Jesus. Bread is sweet to the hungry man, but we are not always hungry, and sometimes we have no appetite; but the best of God's word is that he who lives near to God has always an appetite for it, and the more he eats of it the more he can eat. I do confess I have often fed upon God's

word when I have had no appetite for it, until I have gained an appetite. I have grown hungry in proportion as I have felt satisfied: my emptiness seemed to kill my hunger, but as I have been revived by the word I have longed for more. So it is written, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled:" and when they are filled they shall continue to enjoy the benediction, for they shall hunger and thirst still though filled with grace. God's word is sweeter to the taste than bread to a hungry man, and its sweetness never cloys, though it dwells long on the palate. You cannot be always eating bread, but you can always feed on the word of God. You cannot eat all the meat that is set before you, your capacity is limited that way, and none but a glutton wishes it otherwise; but oh, you may be ravenous of God's word, and devour it all, and yet have no surfeit. You are like a little mouse in a great cheese, and you shall have permission to eat it all, though it be a thousand times greater than yourself. Though God's thoughts are greater than your thoughts, and his ways are greater than your ways, yet may his ways be in your heart, and your heart in his ways. You may be filled with all the fulness of God, though it seems a paradox. His fulness is greater than you, and *all* his fulness is infinitely greater than you, yet you may be filled with all the fulness of God. So that the word of God is better than our necessary food: it hath qualities which our necessary food hath not.

No more, except it be this: you cannot be holy, my brethren, unless you do in secret live upon the blessed word of God, and you will not live on it unless it comes to you as the word *of his mouth*. It is very sweet to get a letter from home when you are far away: it is like a bunch of fresh flowers in winter time. A letter from the dear one at home is as music heard over the water; but half a dozen words from that dear mouth are better than a score pages of manuscript, for there is a sweetness about the look and the tone which paper cannot carry. Now, I want you to get the Bible to be not a book only but a speaking trumpet, through which God speaks from afar to you, so that you may catch the very tones of his voice. You must read the word of God to this end, for it is while reading, meditating, and studying, and seeking to dip yourself into its spirit, that it seems suddenly to change from a written book into a talking book or phonograph; it whispers to you or thunders at you as though God had hidden himself among its leaves and spoke to your condition; as though Jesus who feedeth among the lilies had made the chapters to be lily beds, and had come to feed there. Ask Jesus to cause his word to come fresh from his own mouth to your soul; and if it be so, and you thus live in daily communion with a personal Christ, my brethren, you will then with your feet take hold upon his steps; then will you keep his way, then will you never decline or go back from his commandments, but you will make good speed in your pilgrim way to the eternal city. May the Holy Ghost daily be with you. May every one of you live under his sacred bedewing, and be fruitful in every good word and work. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 9—40.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—84, 112, 649.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PERFECT SANCTIFICATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."—Hebrews x. 10.

DEAR friends, ever since the Lord has quickened us by his grace we have begun to look into ourselves and to search our hearts to see our condition before God. Hence many things which once caused us no disquietude now create in us great anxiety. We thought that we were all right, and felt it to be enough to be quite as good as others. We dreamed that if we were not quite as good as we should be we should certainly grow better, though we did not stop to enquire how or why. We took stock of our condition and concluded that we were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. A change has come over the spirit of the scene; the grace of God has made us thoughtful and careful. We dare not take things at haphazard now. We test and prove things, for we are very anxious not to be deceived. We look upon eternal realities as being of the utmost consequence, and we dare not take them for granted as being certain to be right. We are afraid of being presumptuous; we long to be sincere. We hold an assize within our spirits, and we are so afraid that we may be partial, as probably we shall be, that we ask the Lord to search us and try us, to see if there be any wicked way in us, that he may lead us out of such a way into the way everlasting. This is all very wise and very proper, and I would not for a moment try to take off the people of God from a proper measure of this state of heart; and yet let it never be forgotten that we are in the sight of God other in some respects than we shall ever see ourselves to be if we look through the glass of feeling and consciousness. There are other matters to be taken into consideration, matters which our anxiety may lead us to overlook, and our inward search may cause us to forget.

Faith reveals to us another position for the people of God besides that which they occupy in themselves. Some call it an evangelical fiction, and the like; but, thank God, it is a blessed fact that, sinners as we are in ourselves, yet believers are saints in God's sight, and that sinful as they

feel themselves to be, yet they are washed, cleansed, and sanctified in Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding all that we mourn over, the very fact that we do mourn over it becomes an evidence that we are no longer what we once were, and do not stand now where we once stood. We have passed from death unto life. We have escaped from under the dominion of law into the kingdom of grace. We have come from under the curse, and we dwell in the region of blessing. We have believed on him that justifieth the ungodly, and our faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans iv. 5). There is therefore now no condemnation to us, for we are in Christ Jesus our Lord, and walk no longer after the flesh but after the Spirit. That your hearts may be gladdened, I want you to think of the noble position into which the grace of God has lifted all believers —the condition of sanctification which is spoken of in the text—for by the "will of God we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

We shall, first, speak of *the eternal will;* secondly, of *the effectual sacrifice by which that will has been carried out;* and, thirdly, of *the everlasting result accomplished by that will through the sacrifice of the body of Christ.* May the Holy Spirit who has revealed the grand doctrine of justification now enable us to understand it and to feel its comforting power.

I. First, then, THE ETERNAL WILL—"By the which will we are sanctified."

This will must, first of all, be viewed as the will *ordained of old by the Father*—the eternal decree of the infinite Jehovah, that a people whom he chose should be sanctified and set apart unto himself. The will of Jehovah stands fast for ever and ever, and we know of it that it is altogether unchangeable, and that it has no beginning. It is an eternal will, we have no vacillating deity, no fickle God. He wills changes, but he never changes his will. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." The will of God is invincible as well as eternal. We are told in the Ephesians that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. "Who can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" The good pleasure of his will is never defeated: there cannot be such a thing as a vanquished God. "His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." In fact, the will of God is the motive force of all things. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." His word is omnipotent because his will is at the back of it, and it puts force into it. He said "Light be," and there was light, because he willed that there should be light. He bade creatures come forth, numerous as the drops of dew, to people the world that he had made, and forth they came, flying, leaping, swimming, in varied orders of life, because of his own will he did create them. His will is the secret power which sustains the universe, and threads the starry orbs, and holds them like a necklace of light about the neck of nature. His will is the Alpha and the Omega of all things. It was according to this eternal, invincible will of God that he chose, created, and set apart a people that should show forth the glory and riches of his grace, a people that should bear the image of his only-begotten Son, a people that should joyfully and willingly serve him in his courts for ever and ever, a people who should

be his own sons and daughters, to whom he would say, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Thus stood the eternal will of old. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

But the people concerning whom this will was made were dead in sin, defiled with evil, polluted by transgression. The old serpent's venom was in their veins. They were fit to be set apart for the curse, but not to be set apart for the service of the thrice holy God. And the question was, how then should the will of the Immutable Invincible ever be carried out? How shall these rebels become absolved? How shall these fountains of filth become clear as crystal, pouring forth floods of living water and divine praise? How shall these unsanctified and defiled ones become sanctified unto the service of God? It must be,—but how shall it be? Then came the priests, with smoking censers, and with basins full of blood, steaming as it came fresh from the slaughtered victims, and they sprinkled this blood upon the book and upon the people, upon the altar, and upon the mercy-seat, and upon all the hangings of the tabernacle, and all the ground whereon the worshippers walked, for almost all things under the law were sanctified by blood. Everywhere was this blood of bulls and of goats. Fresh every morning and renewed every evening. Still, God's will was not done, the chosen were not thus sanctified, and we know they were not, because it is written, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." His will was not fulfilled in them. It was not his will that they should sanctify the people. They were inefficacious to such an end, for, as the Holy Ghost has said, it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins:" and so, if these offerings had been all, centuries of the house of Aaron and of the priests of the tribe of Levi might have come and gone, and yet the will decreed by the eternal Father would not have been an accomplished fact.

Thus we are landed at our second point, which is, that this will by which we are sanctified was *performed of the ever blessed Son*. It was the will of God the Father, but it was carried out by the divine Son when he came into the world. A body was prepared for him, and into that body, in a mysterious manner which we will not attempt even to conceive of, he entered, and there he was the incarnate God. This incarnate God, by offering his own blood, by laying down his own life, by bearing in his own body the curse, and in his own spirit enduring the wrath, was able to effect the purpose of the everlasting Father in the purging of his people, in the setting of his chosen apart, and making them henceforth holiness unto the Lord. Do you not see what the will of the Father was—that he should have a people that should be sanctified unto himself? But that will could not be carried out by the blood of bulls and of goats, it must be achieved by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Our Lord Jesus Christ has done whatsoever that will of the Father required for its perfect achievement. This is our satisfaction. We will not enter at this time into a detailed account of our Lord's active and passive obedience by which he magnified the law and set apart his people. I pray you, however, never fall into the error of dividing the work of Christ as some do, and saying, "Here he made

atonement for sin, and there he did not." In these modern times certain brethren have invented refinements of statement of so trivial a character that they are not even worth the trouble of thinking over, and yet, like babes with a new rattle, they make a noise with them all day long. It is amusing how these wise professors make grave points out of mere hair-splitting distinctions, and if we do not agree with them they give themselves mighty airs, pitying our ignorance, and esteeming themseves as superior persons who have an insight into things which ordinary Christians cannot see. God save us from having eyes which are so sharp that we are able to spy out new occasions for difference, and fresh reasons for making men offenders for mere words. I believe in the life of Christ as well as in his death, and I believe that he stood for me before God as much when he walked the acres of Palestine as when he hung on the cross at Jerusalem. You cannot divide and split him in sunder and say, "He is so far an example, and so far an atonement," but you must take the entire Christ, and look at him from the very first as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. "Oh, but," they say, "he made no atonement except in his death," which is, let me tell you, an absurdity in language. Listen a minute. When does a man die? I cannot tell you. There is the minute in which the soul separates from the body; but all the time that a man may be described as dying he is alive, is he not? A man does not suffer when actually dead. What we call the pangs of death are truly and accurately pangs of life. Death does not suffer; it is the end of suffering. A man is in life while he suffers; and if they say, "It is Christ's death that makes an atonement, and not his life," I reply that death, alone and by itself, makes no atonement. Death in its natural sense, and not in this modern non-natural severance from life, does make atonement; but it cannot be viewed apart from life by any unsophisticated mind. If they must have distinctions we could make distinctions enough to worry them of such an unprofitable business, but we have nobler work to do. To us our Lord's death seems to be the consummation of his life, the finishing stroke of a work which his Father had given him to do among the sons of men. We view him as having come in a body prepared for him to do the will of God *once*, and that "once" lasted throughout his one life on earth. We will not, however, dwell on any moot point, but unfeignedly rejoice that whatever was wanted to make God's people wholly sanctified unto God, Christ has wrought out. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." It is finished. Does the divine law require for our acceptance perfect submission to the will of the Lord? He has rendered it. Does it ask complete obedience to its precepts? He has presented the same. Does the fulfilled will of the Lord call for abject suffering, a sweat of blood, pangs unknown, and death itself? Christ has presented it all, whatever that "all" may be. As, when God created, his word effected all his will; so, when God redeemed, his blessed and incarnate Word has done all his will. In every point, as God looked on each day's work and said "It is good," so, as he looks upon each part of the work of his dear Son, he can say of it, "It is good." The Father joins in the verdict of his Son, that it is finished: all the will of God for the sanctification of his people is accomplished.

Beloved, this work must be *applied to us by the Holy Spirit.* It is the Holy Ghost who brings us to know that Jesus Christ has sanctified us, or set us apart, and made us acceptable with God. It is the Holy Spirit who has given us the New Testament, and shed a light upon the Old. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through the ministers of Christ when he blesses them to our conversion. Especially is it the Holy Ghost who takes away from us all hope of being sanctified before God by any means of our own, brings us to see our need of cleansing and reconciliation, and then takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. Not without the going forth of his sacred power are we made to take the place of separation, and dedication, to which the Lord of old ordained us.

Thus it is by the will of the Father, carried out by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit, that the church of God is regarded as sanctified before God, and is acceptable unto him.

I do not tarry longer on any one point, because these great things are best spoken of with few words: they are subjects better fed upon by quiet thought than exhibited in speech.

II. I invite you, dear friends, in the second place, to consider THE EFFECTUAL SACRIFICE by which the will of God with regard to the sanctity of his people has been carried out. "By the which will we are sanctified *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.*"

This implies, first, his incarnation, which of course includes his eternal deity. We can never forget that Jesus Christ is God. The church has given forth many a valiant confession to his deity; and woe be to her should she ever hesitate on that glorious truth! Yet sometimes she has great need earnestly to insist upon his humanity. As you bow before your glorious Lord, and adore him with all the sanctified, yet remember that he whom you worship was truly and really a man. The gospel of his incarnation is not a spiritual idea, nor a metaphor, nor a myth. In very deed and truth the God that made heaven and earth came down to earth, and hung upon a woman's breast as an infant. That child, as he grew in stature and wisdom, was as certainly God as he is at this moment in glory. He was as surely God when he was here hungering and suffering, sleeping, eating, drinking, as he was God when he hung up the morning stars and kindled the lamps of night, or as he shall be when sun and moon shall grow dim at the brightness of his coming. Jesus Christ, very God of very God, did certainly stoop to become such as we are, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. It is a truth you all know, but I want you to grasp it and realize it. It will help you to trust Christ if you clearly perceive that, divine as he is, he is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh—your kinsman, though the Son of God.

All this is implied in the text, because it speaks of the offering of *the body* of Christ. But why does it specially speak of the body? I think to show us the reality of that offering; his soul suffered, and his soul's sufferings were the soul of his sufferings, but still, to make it palpable to you, to record it as a sure historical fact, he mentions that there was an offering of the body of Christ.

I take it, however, that *the word means the whole of Christ*—that there was an offering made of all of Christ, the body of him, or that of which he was constituted. It is my solemn conviction that the deity co-worked

with his humanity in the wondrous passion by which he has sanctified his elect. I am told that deity cannot suffer. I am expected to subscribe to that because theologians say so. Well, if it be true, then I shall content myself with believing that the deity helped the humanity by strengthening it to suffer more than it could otherwise have endured: but I believe that deity can suffer, heterodox as that notion may seem to be. I cannot believe in an impassive God as my Father. If he pities and sympathizes, surely he must have some sensibilities. Is he a God of iron? If he wills it he can do anything, and therefore he can suffer if he pleases. It is not possible for God to be made to suffer, that would be a ridiculous supposition; yet if he wills to do so he is certainly capable of doing that as well as anything else, for all things are possible to him. I look upon our Lord Jesus as in his very Godhead stooping down to bear the weight of human sin and human misery, sustaining it because he was divine, and able to bear what else had been too great a load. Thus the whole of Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. It was the offering, not of the spirit of Christ, but of the very body of Christ—the essence, subsistence, and most manifest reality and personality of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High.

And *this was wholly offered.* I do not know how to bring out my own thought here; but to accomplish the will of God in sanctifying all his people Christ must be the offering, and he must be wholly offered. There were certain sacrifices which were only presented to God in part, so far as the consumption by fire was concerned. A part was eaten by the priest or by the offerer, and so far it was not a whole burnt-offering. In this there was much precious truth set forth, of which we will not speak at this present; but as our sin-offering, making expiation for guilt, our blessed Lord and Master gave himself wholly for us, as an atoning sacrifice and offering for sin: and that "himself" sums up all you can conceive to be in and of the Christ of God; and the pangs and griefs which like a fire went through him did consume him, even to the uttermost of all that was in him. He bore all that could be borne, stooped to the lowest to which humility could come, descended to the utmost abyss to which a descent of self-denial could be made. He made himself of no reputation: he emptied himself of all honour and glory. He gave up himself without reserve. He saved others, himself he could not save; he spares us in our chastisements, but himself he spared not. He says of himself, in the twenty-second Psalm, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." You do not know, you cannot imagine, how fully the sacrifice was made by Christ. It was not only a sacrifice of all of himself, but a complete sacrifice of every part of himself for us. The blaze of eternal wrath for human sin was focussed upon his head! The anguish that must have been endured by him who stood in the place of millions of sinners to be judged of God and smitten in their stead is altogether inconceivable. Though himself perfectly innocent, yet in his own person to offer up such a sacrifice as could honour the divine justice on account of myriads of sins of myriads of the sons of men was a work far beyond all human realization. You may give loose to your reason and your imagination, and rise into the seventh heaven of sublime conception as with eagle wing, but you can never reach the utmost height. Here is the sum of the matter—"Thanks

be unto God for his unspeakable gift," for unspeakable, inconceivable it certainly is when we view the Lord Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

This offering was made *once, and only once.* The pith of the text lies in the finishing words of it, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Those words "for all" are very properly put in by the translators; but you must not make a mistake as to their meaning. The text does *not* mean that Christ offered himself up once *for all,*—that is, for all mankind. That may be a doctrine of Scripture, or it may not be a doctrine of Scripture, but it is not the teaching here. The passage means "once for all" in the sense of—all at once, or only once. As a man might say, "I gave up my whole estate once for all to my creditors, and there was an end of the matter," so here our Lord Jesus Christ is said to have offered himself up as a sacrifice once for all—that is to say, only once, and there was an end of the whole matter. His sacrifice on behalf of his people was for all the sins before he came. Think of what they all were. Ages had succeeded ages, and there had been found amongst the various generations of men criminals of the blackest dye, and crimes had been multiplied; but the prophet said in vision concerning Christ, as he looked on all the multitude, "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord *hath laid* on him the iniquity of us all." That was before he came. Reflect that there has been no second offering of himself ever since, and never will be, but it was *once,* and that once did the deed. Let your mind conceive of this, nearly two thousand years have passed since the offering, and if the prophet were to stand here to-night and look back through those eighteen hundred years and more, he would still say, "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Oh! it is a wonderful conception—the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was the reservoir into which all the sin of the human race ran, from this quarter, and that, and that, and that, and that. All the sin of his people rolled in a torrent unto him, and gathered as in a great lake. In him was no sin, and yet the Lord made him to be sin for us. You may have seen a deep mountain tarn which has been filled to the brim by innumerable streamlets from all the hillsides round about. Here comes a torrent gushing down, and there trickles from the moss that has overgrown the rock a little drip, drip, drip, which falls perpetually: great and small tributaries all meet in the black tarn, which after the rain is full to the brim, and ready to burst its banks. That lone lake pictures Christ, the meeting-place of the sin of his people. It was all laid on him, that from him the penalty might be exacted. At his hands the price must be demanded for the ransom of all this multitude of sins.

And it is said that he did this *once for all.* I have no language with which to describe it: but I see before me the great load of sin, the huge, tremendous world of sin. No, no, it is greater than the world. Atlas might carry *that,* but this is a weight compared with which the world is but as a pin's head. Mountains upon mountains, alps on alps, are nothing to the mighty mass of sin which I see before my mind's eye: and lo, it all falls upon the Well-beloved. He stands beneath it, and bows under it till the bloody sweat starts from every pore, and yet he

does not yield to its weight so as to get away from the burden. It presses more heavily, it bows him to the dust, it touches his very soul, it makes him cry in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and yet at the last he lifts himself up and flings it all away, and cries, "It is finished!" and it is gone. There is not a wreck of it left: no, not an atom of it left. It is all gone at once, and once for all. He has borne the immeasurable weight and cast it off from his shoulders for ever; and as it lies no more on him so also it lies no more on them. Sin shall never be mentioned against his people any more for ever. Oh, wondrous deed of deity! Oh, mighty feat of love accomplished once for all. The Redeemer never offered himself to death before. He never will do it again.

Look this way, my brethren, the reason why it never will be done again is because there is no need for it. All the sin that was laid upon Jesus is gone: all the sin of his people is for ever discharged. He has borne it: the debt is paid. The handwriting of ordinances against us is nailed to his cross: the accuser's charge is answered for ever. What, then, shall we say of those who come forward and pretend that they perpetually present the body of Christ in the unbloody sacrifice of the mass? Why, this—that no profane jest from the lip of Voltaire ever had even the slightest degree of God-defiant blasphemy in it compared with such a hideous insult as this horrible pretence. It is infernal. I will say no less. There can be nothing more intolerable than that notion: for our Lord Jesus Christ has offered himself for sin once, and once for all; and he who dares to think of offering him again insults him by acting as if that once were not enough. I cannot believe any language of abhorrence to be too strong if the performers and attendants at the mass really knew what is implied in their professed act and deed. In the judgment of Christian charity we may earnestly pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Our words fail and our conceptions faint at the thought of the great Substitute with all the sins of his people condensed into one black draught and set before him. How shall we think of him as putting that cup to his lip, and drinking, drinking, drinking all the wrath till he had drained the cup to the bottom and filled himself with horror? Yet see, he has finished the death-drink and turned the cup upside down, crying, "It is finished." At one tremendous draught the loving Lord has drained destruction dry for all his people, and there is no dreg nor drop left for any one of them; for now is the will of God accomplished—"by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Glory be to God! And yet again, glory be to God!

> "He bore on the tree the sentence for me,
> And now both the Surety and sinner are free.
> In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am;
> And my heart doth rejoice at the sound of his name."

III. Now I close with our third head, and that is THE EVERLASTING RESULT.

The everlasting result of this effectual carrying out of the will of God is that now *God regards his people's sin as expiated*, and their persons [redacted] sanctified. Our sin is removed by expiation. Atonement has been

offered, and its efficacy abides for ever. There is no need of any other expiation. Believers repent bitterly, but not in the way of expiation. There is no penance to be exacted of them by way of putting away guilt. Their guilt is gone; their transgression is forgiven. The covenant is made with them, and it runs thus: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever." Their sins have, in fact, been ended, blotted out, and annihilated by the Redeemer's one sacrifice.

Next, *they are reconciled.* There is no quarrel now between God and those who are in Christ Jesus. Peace is made between them twain. The middle wall that stood between them is taken away. Christ by his one sacrifice has made peace for all his people, and effectually established an amity which never shall be broken.

"Lord Jesus, we believing
In thee have peace with God,
Eternal life receiving,
The purchase of thy blood.
Our curse and condemnation
Thou bearest in our stead;
Secure is our salvation
In thee, our risen Head."

Moreover, they are not only accepted and reconciled, but *they are purified;* the taint that was upon them is taken away. In God's sight they are regarded no more as unclean; they are no longer shut without the camp, they may come to the throne of the heavenly grace when they will. God can have communion with them. He regards them as fit to stand in his courts and to be his servants, for they are purified, reconciled, expiated through the one offering of Christ. Their admission into the closest intimacy with God could never be allowed if he did not regard them as purged from all uncleanness, and this has been effected not at all by themselves, but alone by the great sacrifice.

"Thy blood, not mine, O Christ,
Thy blood so freely spilt,
Has blanched my blackest stains,
And purged away my guilt.

"Thy righteousness, O Christ,
Alone does cover me;
No righteousness avails
Save that which is in thee."

Now, what has come of it? That is the point. I want you now just to let me leave the doctrine and try and bring out the experience arising from it. What Christ has done in the carrying out of the great will of God has effected salvation for all his chosen; but this is applied to them actually and experimentally by the Holy Ghost's dwelling in them, by which indwelling they know they are now God's people. The Israelites were God's people, after a fashion; the Levites were more peculiarly so, and the priests were still more especially so, and these had to present perpetual sacrifices and offerings that God might be able to look upon them as his people, for they were a sinful people. *You and I are not typically, but truly and really his people.* Through Jesus Christ's offering of himself once for all we are really set apart to be the Lord's

people henceforth and for ever, and he says of us—I mean, of course, not of us all, but of as many as have believed in Jesus, and to whom the Holy Ghost has revealed his finished work—"I will be their God, and they shall be my people." You, believers, are sanctified in this sense, that you are now the set-apart ones unto God, and you belong wholly to him. Will you think that over? "I am now not my own. I do not belong now to the common order of men, as all the rest of men do. I am set apart. I am called out. I am taken aside. I am one of the Lord's own. I am his treasure and his portion. He has through Jesus Christ's death made me one of those of whom he says—'They shall dwell alone, they shall not be numbered among the people.'" I want you to feel it so that you may live under the power of that fact; that you may feel, "My Lord has cleansed me. My Lord has made expiation for me. My Lord has reconciled me unto God, and I am God's man, I am God's woman. I cannot live as others do. I cannot be one among you. I must come out. I must be separate. I cannot find my pleasure where you find yours. I cannot find my treasure where you find yours. I am God's, and God is mine. That wondrous transaction on the cross of which our minister has tried to speak, but of which he could not speak as he ought,—that wondrous unspeakable deed upon the cross, that wonderful life and death of Jesus, has made me one of God's people, set apart unto him, and as such I must live."

When you realize that you are God's people, the next thing is to reflect that God in sanctifying a people set them apart for his service, and *he made them fit for his service.* You, beloved, through Christ's one great offering of his body for you, are permitted now to be the servants of God. You know it is an awful thing for a man to try and serve God until God gives him leave: there is a presumption about it. Suppose that one of the Queen's enemies, who has sought her life, and has always spoken against her, were to say, "I mean to be one of her servants, I will go into her palace and I will serve her," having all the while in his heart a rebellious, proud spirit; his service could not be tolerated, it would be sheer impudence. Even so, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" A wicked man, pretending to serve God, stands in the position of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, trying to offer incense; because he is not purified and not called to the work, and has no fitness for it. But now, beloved, you that are in Christ are called to be his servants. You have permission and leave to serve him. It ought to be your great joy to be accepted servants of the living God. If you are only the Lord's shoeblack you have a greater privilege than if you were an emperor. If the highest thing you ever will be allowed to do should be to loose the latchet of your Master's shoe, or to wash his servants' feet, if that master be Christ, you are favoured above the mightiest of the mighty. Men of renown may envy you: their orders of the Garter or the Golden Fleece are nothing compared with the high dignity of being servitors of King Jesus. Look upon this as being the result of Christ's death upon the cross, that such a poor, sinful creature as you are, that were once a slave of the devil, are now suffered to be the servant of God. On the cross my Master bought for me the privilege to preach to you at this time; and he bought for you, dear mother, the privilege to go home and train

your little child for the great Father in heaven; in fact, he bought for us a sanctification which has made us the Lord's people, and has enabled us to engage in his service. Do we not rejoice in this?

Next to that we have this privilege, that *what we do can now be accepted.* Because Jesus Christ by the offering of his body once has perfected the Father's will, and has sanctified us, therefore what we do is now accepted with God. We might have done whatever we would, but God would not have accepted it of a sinner's hands—of the hands of those that were out of Christ. Now he accepts anything of us. You dropped a penny into the box: it was all that you could give, and the Lord accepted it. It dropped into his hand. You offered a little prayer in the middle of business this afternoon because you heard an ill word spoken; and your God accepted that prayer. You went down the street and spoke to a poor sick person; you did not say much, but you said all you could: the great God accepted it. Acceptance in the Beloved, not only for our persons, but for our prayers and our work, is one of the sweetest things I know of. We are accepted. That is the joy of it. Through that one great, bloody sacrifice, once for all offered, God's people are for ever accepted, and what his people do for him is accepted too; and now we are privileged to the highest degree, being sanctified—that is to say, made into God's people, God's servants, and God's accepted servants. Every privilege which we could have had, if we had never sinned, is now ours, and we are in him as his children. We have more than would have come to us by the covenant of works; and if we will but know it, and live up to it, even the very privilege of suffering and the privilege of being tried, the privilege of being in want, should be looked upon as a great gift, for methinks an angel spirit, seated high alone there, meditating and adoring, might say within himself, "I have served God: these swift wings have borne me through the ether on his errands, but *I never suffered for him.* I was never despised for him. Drunkards never called me ill names. I was never misrepresented as God's servant. After all, though I have served him, it has been one perpetual joy. He hath set a hedge about me and all that I have." If an angel could envy anybody, I think he would envy the martyr who had the privilege of burning quick to the death for Christ, or such as Job, who, when stripped of everything and covered with sores, could sit on a dunghill and yet honour his God; because such as these achieved a service unique within itself, which has sparkling diamonds of the first water glittering about it, such as cannot be found in an unsuffering ministry be it as complete as it may. You are favoured sons of Adam, you who have become sons of God. You are favoured beyond cherubim and seraphim in accomplishing a service for the manifestation of the riches of the grace of God, which unfallen spirits never could accomplish. Rejoice and be exceeding glad that this one offering has put you here.

And now you are eternally secure. No sin can ever be laid to your door, for it is all put away, and sin being removed every other evil has lost its fang and sting. Now you are eternally beloved for you are one with him who can never be other than dear to the heart of Jehovah. That union never can be broken, for nothing can separate us from the love of God, and hence your security can never be imperilled. Now

are you in some measure glorified, for "the spirit of glory and of Christ doth rest upon you," and our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who hath already raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies. Heaven is already ours in promise, in price, and in principle, and the preparation for it has also begun. I feel at this hour that—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."

In such a spirit would I always live. Brethren and sisters, are you dispirited at this time? Have you a great trouble upon you? Are you alone in the world? Do others misjudge you, or does the iron of scandal pierce your very soul? Do fierce coals of juniper await those vicious tongues that wrong you? Do you feel bowed into the dust? Yet, what art thou at to be despairing? Child of God, and heir of all things, why art thou cast down? Joint heir with Christ, why grovellest thou? Why liest thou among the pots when thou hast already angels' wings about thee? Up, man, up. Thy heritage is not here among the dragons and the owls. Up! Thou art one of God's eagles, born for brighter light than earth could bear—light that would blind the blear-eyed sons of men if they were once to get a veiled glimpse of it. Thou, a twice-born man, one of the imperial family, one that shall sit upon a throne with Christ as surely as Christ sits there, what art thou at to be moaning and groaning? Wipe thy eyes and smooth thy brow, and in the strength of the Eternal go to thy life-battle. It will not be long. The trumpet of victory almost sounds in thy ears. Wilt thou now beat a retreat? No. Play the man and win the day. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," till he comes to catch thee away where thou shalt see what Jesus did for thee when he made his body once for all a sacrifice, that he might fulfil the will of the eternal Father, and sanctify thee and all his people unto God for ever and ever. May the best of blessings rest upon all who are in Christ Jesus.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews x. 1—22.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—395, 406, 593.

STOCKWELL ORPHANAGE FOR GIRLS.—The land being bought and paid for, Mr. Spurgeon is anxious to begin building, since large numbers of orphans are applying. The block, which will contain houses for 250 girls, and the various school-rooms, will cost about £8,000, of which £3,000 is promised. To raise the rest of the money will need the united liberality of many, and the special bounty of the few who are wealthy. It is proposed that the first stone should be laid on Mr. Spurgeon's birthday, June 19, should a sufficient sum be in hand to make it prudent to begin. Sympathizing readers can forward donations to Mr. Spurgeon, Nightingale-lane, Balham, and he will gratefully acknowledge the same.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"THEY WERE TEMPTED."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 14TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They were tempted."—Hebrews xi. 37.

LAST Lord's-day I tried to draw the fair portrait of a believing man, putting his feet into God's steps, and keeping God's way even unto the end. This morning we shall show in what circumstances such men were produced. We shall discover that they were not nursed upon the lap of ease, but were born, and reared, and perfected amid storms of opposition. We shall again see "the lily among thorns." The gracious characters of which we read in Scripture were not created by favourable circumstances: they owed nothing to their position, or age, their character was formed from within. Their faith was not produced by the tenderness of providence, they were not put into a conservatory like fair flowers which cannot endure the frost: rather might we say that they were helped to their robustness by the rough winter-blasts which swept over them. They were warriors of peace: pilgrims who travelled armed to the teeth, making no holiday march, but contending with giants and dragons. Whoever else may find life a sport, the saints have found it to be real and earnest; their path has been no mere parade, but grim and grisly dangers have beset them; "they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword." One form of the opposition which they encountered is the subject of this morning's meditation—"They were tempted."

Do not forget that the leading principle of a godly man is faith, and according to this chapter faith is the force by which brave deeds are done, and great sufferings are endured. All the world appears to be in arms against the man of faith. Ishmael, the child of human strength, mocks Isaac, who is born by the power of faith according to promise. Yet faith is able to bear all attacks, and to flourish under them, even as the Israelites in Egypt multiplied the more as their oppressions were increased. The sufferings of believers, which are mentioned by Paul, are very varied and exceedingly intense; and this is one of them: "they were tempted." The speedy weapon of stone, or sword, or saw, gratified the malice which sought their death, but tempting them satisfied a more subtle hate, which stabbed at their character and their faith. In temptation there is for the soul all the deadliness which the slaughter weapon

brings to the body. It is blessed to observe that the faithful survived this danger also. A torrent roared against them, and they stemmed it with resolute confidence; they did not drift with the current, nor drown in its floods.

Dealing with this one form of opposition, "they were tempted," I shall be able to say a great many more practical things than if I were preaching upon "they were stoned," or "they were sawn asunder," for those things happen but now and then, but this record that "they were tempted" is repeated in us all, and especially in you who have lately set out on the heavenly pilgrimage. You have got far enough to discover that you are not to be allowed to go to heaven if Satan can prevent it, nor suffered to remain a Christian if by any means the men of this world can cast you down. You are being tempted: may the practical word I shall be able to speak be applied with power by the Holy Spirit to your comfort and help.

I. First I will call attention to THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH OF THE STATEMENT now before us. It is not true that all the saints were scourged, nor all imprisoned, neither were all stoned, nor all slain with the sword, but it is true of the whole cloud of witnesses that they were all tempted. The word "tempted" bears two meanings; first of all, that of being tried or afflicted; and secondly, that of being persuaded or enticed to sin.

In the first aspect of it God did tempt Abraham, that is, he tried him; and this he does with all his people. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without trial. "What son is there whom the Father chastened not?" "Whereof ye are all partakers," says Paul, when he speaks of chastening. "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." His own elect are made to feel his refining fires, for he declares of each one "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." All the sheep of Christ bear his private mark; he sets the cross of affliction upon them all. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Before you shall find me a man who has never known trouble I think you will have ridden many a horse lame and searched far and wide; for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" but I will guarantee that this wonderful untried person is as much a stranger to God as he is to affliction. Within the sacred enclosure of the elect of God you shall not be able to discover one whom the Lord has not in some way or at some time afflicted in love. Count it not therefore a strange thing, my dear brother, that you should have a cross to carry. Do not begin to kick against the pricks as though some unusual suffering were laid upon you when the Lord touches you with the goad of sorrow. You are one among many, and among the many there are worthy ones who bear heavier loads than yours. Envy none, but feel a brotherhood with all the faithful, for they too "were tempted."

As for the other sense of the word "tempt," the bad and hard one, in that sense also the statement is universally true. All the people of God have been tempted to sin. *Satan* no sooner perceives a child of God renewed in heart and cleansed from defilement than he endeavours if he can to mar the work of the Holy Spirit, to ruin the happiness of the believer, and to weaken his usefulness by leading him into sin. The

prince of the power of the air, though he cannot be everywhere himself, manages with his host of underlings to be so nearly omnipresent that he tempts us all in turns, and some of us very fiercely. Woe unto the man who is beset by the arch enemy himself, if he is not abiding in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. If the Lord be away from the believer it will go hard with him when Apollyon himself meets him in deadly duel. The fiend is stronger and craftier than we are, and unless the Lord cover our head in the day of battle we shall find his fiery darts too terrible. This, however, is some comfort, that every believer now with God has crossed swords with the devil; he has not suffered one to pass unmolested—"they were tempted."

Nor is it Satan alone who tempts the saints. *The world* is always tempting God's people, and there is no position in life which is free from peril. A man sick of the fever dreams that if he can be placed in another bed he shall feel better: it is but a dream. He turns and tosses to and fro upon his pillow, but as Watts well says,

> "It is a poor relief we gain
> To shift the place but keep the pain."

In this mortal life we may change our position, but we shall never get away from temptation. Temptations are with kings upon their thrones, and with peasants at the plough: they come of plenty and they come of poverty, they are born of success and they are born of defeat. Whether our path be rough or smooth we are liable to be tripped up unless a hand unseen shall hold us up. This is true of all who have gone before us—"they were tempted."

At times providence permits *those who are in authority* to exercise great power of temptation. So it was with the saints of old: those who were in power accounted them as sheep for the slaughter. The rulers of the synagogues, and then the magistrates, rulers, and emperors set themselves against God and against his Christ, and those who held the reins of government were determined that they would put down the reign of Christ, and utterly destroy his people. Princes and potentates became the willing servitors of Satan, threatening and bribing those who had espoused the faith. So far as open, legalized persecution by the State is concerned, we are happily free from it; but of those who in the martyr days bore high the banner of the cross it may be said with emphasis—"they were tempted."

But, brethren, if there were no devil and if there were no wicked world it would still be true that the saints are tempted, for every man is tempted when he is "drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"; and there is that within the best of men which might make them into the worst of men if the grace of God did not prevent. O child of God, thou art on one side fair as an angel, and the grace of God gleams upon thee, and makes thee bright as thy transfigured Master: and yet on the other side of thee thou art black as a devil, and if the grace of God were taken from thee thou wouldst as much dishonour the name and cross of Christ as ever did the false apostate who took the thirty pieces of silver. Every good man is two men: he finds an I fighting against his real I; the old man, according to its corruptions and lusts, daily warring with the new-born man within him, which cannot sin, because it is born of

God. Now it is true, not only of you and me, but it has been true of all the people of God, that they have had inward conflicts and spiritual contests within themselves of the most painful kind.

The saints were tempted: they were persuaded to sin by Satan, by the world, and by the propensities of their nature, and of all the blood-redeemed host it must be said, "they were tempted."

Ought not this fact to restrain every man from a self-indulgent despair. Do you know what I mean? I mean this: a man says, "Well, I cannot help it; I am in such a place of temptation that if I give way I may well be excused." Not so, sir; "they were tempted," and yet they did not fall, but held fast their integrity. They who to-day are waving the palm of victory were tempted even as you are, and it is idle for you to say that victory is impossible, seeing they have proved the reverse. Using the same weapons, and helped by the same Spirit, your temptations, which are the same as theirs, will be overcome by you, even as theirs were vanquished by them. Up and fight like men; dream no longer of impossibilities which might excuse you: what has been done by one by the help of God can be done by another.

This leaves us without any excuse for yielding to temptation. I know we commonly think that if we can prove that we are tempted there is not much blame attached to us; but it is not so. It is most true that those who tempt others are guilty of the greater sin; but the sin of those who are tempted, and yield to the temptation, is great enough—great enough to crush them into eternal destruction unless they repent of it. Other people have been tempted as you have been, and yet they have resisted the temptation, and have remained in obedience to God, and therefore if you yield to the evil influence you are without excuse. The multitude of holy men and women who are now before the throne of God are all witnesses against you, for they show what can be done, and what can be done in you too, the grace of God being with you.

This fact that all the saints have been tempted should put an end to all murmuring upon that score. Somebody says, "Mine is a hard lot; I have to follow Christ under great disadvantages. My foes are those of my own household." Yes, your lot may be hard, but if you could just peep within the pearly gates and see that brilliant company, who are the peers of the realm of heaven, you would see none but those who once were tempted. Dare you demand a better lot than theirs? Remember your Master was tempted, and shall the disciple wish to be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? Is there to be some easy bye-road to heaven made for you, turfed from end to end, and rolled every morning?

> "Must you be carried to the skies
> On flowery beds of ease;
> While others fought to win the prize,
> And sail'd through bloody seas?"

You must not expect it; you must fight if you would reign; you must carry the cross as others carried it, if you are like them, to wear the crown. The temptations which were endured by saints in all ages must for ever prevent our complaining if hooks are baited for us and snares laid for our destruction.

One sweet thought arises here; since the best of saints were tempted this prevents our conceiving that to be tempted is in itself a sin. I have known feeble-minded Christians bemoan themselves and cry, "If I were not exceedingly sinful I should not have these hideous thoughts and dreadful suggestions: if my heart were not full of evil I should not have these blasphemous ideas forced into my poor unwilling brain." Beloved, it is not so. If your heart were wholly the devil's he might not care to worry you, and indeed you would not be worried, but would love sin. It is because you are not his, because you are desperately struggling towards holiness and virtue that, therefore, he tempts you. It is no sin to be tempted, the sin is in yielding to temptation. Your Lord was tempted, and yet in him was no sin. Thrice did Satan assail our Lord: three evil courses did he plausibly suggest, but he found nothing in him to work upon; there was no tinder for his sparks to light upon. Be, therefore, greatly comforted you who find evil thoughts rushing through your minds like a torrent. You try to fight against these temptations, and yet they return again and again till your heart is well-nigh broken with them: do not, therefore, condemn yourself for them so long as you abhor them. You are not a castaway because you are tempted, for all the saints in glory were tempted too.

Yea, I think, dear friends, if any of us here present meet with great trials in life, and with very strong temptations to turn back to the world, if God gives us grace to keep towards the New Jerusalem, we may even glory in these trials. We ought to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," for temptation is not to be sought for but to be looked upon as an evil, seeing that flesh is frail; but when it assumes the form of persecution, and our Lord helps us to endure it, steadfast in the faith, we may even rejoice and leap for joy. If your name is slandered, or you become a loser in wage, or in estate, or in comfort for Christ's sake, you may greatly rejoice; for now you have fellowship with Jesus and his suffering followers. You are entering the confederacy of the bravest of the brave. Now shall you share in "that lordlier chivalry" which belongs not to mailed knights, but to spirits purified and ennobled by the Holy Ghost. These are the blessed ones who endure temptation, who when they are tried shall receive the crown of life which fadeth not away.

Forget not, then, the universal truth of the statement before us—"They were tempted."

II. Secondly, let us consider THE UNLIMITED BREADTH OF THE STATEMENT. "They were tempted": it does not say how. If one form of temptation had been mentioned, we should have surmised that they did not suffer in other ways, but when the statement is, "they were tempted," we shall not be wrong in concluding that they were tried in any and every form. Whatever form temptation may take, in some or in all the saints, that temptation has been endured. We may say of Christ's mystical body as we may say of Christ's self—"tempted in all points like as we are."

Brethren, the saints who are in heaven were tempted in all ways. They were tempted by threats, but they were equally tempted by promises. They were put into prison, or they were banished. They were deprived of their goods and of their good names, but they stood fast and firm, and would not yield up Christ, threaten as men might.

Then they were tried by bribes: if they would forsake Christ, and turn from the truth, they should be rich and honourable, they should be restored to their families, they should have in some cases every indulgence which the monarch could grant. They were equally deaf to either form of solicitation: they could not be driven, and they could not be drawn: however the net might be spread they could not be taken in it. Standing at the stake, with the flames kindling, and the faggots beginning to burn, the tempting monk has held up the crucifix, and said, "Kiss it, kiss it, and your life shall be given you, and you shall have great honours"; but they put away the idol from them, and would not dishonour God by worshipping any material substance, whatever it might be. Or else the martyr, on his way to die, has been confronted by his wife and children, kneeling down, and praying their father to have pity upon *them*, if none upon himself, and not to die and leave a widow and fatherless children. But though natural love struggled in their hearts, they overleaped that temptation, for they loved Christ better than the dearest relatives. They have been tempted in subtlest fashion: reason and rhetoric, threat and scorn, bribe and blandishment, have all been used, and used in vain. Against them the enemy has sent forth the arrow which flieth by day, and the pestilence which walketh in darkness, but the Lord has kept their soul alive, and they have glorified his name. Yet very sorely "they were tempted."

They were tempted both with trials peculiar to themselves, and with trials common to us all. We are apt sometimes to say that this age is not congenial to the strength of grace, and I think there is truth in the remark. We are a set of dwarfs, and it seems hard to grow to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus in the atmosphere which daily surrounds us. We have fallen upon an evil age, in which principle is treated like a football in the streets, and bluster rules the hour; but then the ages in which saints lived long ago had their peculiar temptations too, and they were tempted. Every period since the world began has had its own form of spiritual danger; as weapons of war have changed so have temptations, but the old enmity remains. Not always does the swordsman make his cut at the head, sometimes he stabs at the heart, or at another time he drives at the feet: always aiming to wound, but not always aiming at the same part of the man. One age is dark, and ignorance would chill the heart; another is philosophical, and by its false wisdom would overlay the gospel. The points from which the wind blows may differ, but it always blows against the servants of God who are voyaging to heaven. Say not therefore, O child of God, that others who lived before thee were not tempted as thou art, for they endured temptations which to them were as keen and as powerful as any which have fallen to thy share.

They had also special temptations arising out of their individual constitutions. We have every one of us some weak point. One man is not readily made angry, but he is too cold; another is sensitive, but he is too speedily wrathful. One man is full of love and affection, but he lacks decision; another is resolute, but fails in tenderness. Side by side with the special excellence of any character we usually discover a remarkable weakness, calling for great watchfulness; and of all those who are now in heaven it may be said they were tempted, tempted in some

characteristic point, and with some besetting sin. Beloved, if you have to endure the same, mark well that you follow a well-trodden path.

As they had their peculiar temptations so they had the common trials of the most ordinary life. Look at Abraham; not only does he stand alone in the sacrifice of Isaac, but he stands with us in our common afflictions. He is tried in his relatives: his nephew Lot is ungrateful to him and leaves him; tried in his servants, the family is set by the ears by Hagar; tried in his wife, for she complains against him wrongfully; tried in his children, for Ishmael mocks Isaac. His dwelling in tents brought with it quite as much of discomfort and trial as our dwelling in houses. Flocks and herds involve as much care as shops and workrooms. Just such domestic troubles as you and I experience were known to Jacob and David. One man is very like another, and nothing can be more unwise than to set up saintly men who lived ages ago upon a sort of shelf, as if they were unapproachable and inimitable, and belonged to a different race. These heroes are our brothers, their battles are our battles, their victory shall be ours.

Our divine Master himself when he was assailed by the devil in the wilderness, was attacked by those same temptations which have been used against us,—we too have been tempted to use wrong means to supply our pressing needs, to presume upon the providence of God, and to commit idolatry in order to gratify ambition. These are arrows which have rattled on the harness of many soldiers of the cross. Our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, bore the brunt of the battle, and in the matter of temptation he condescended to fight upon the same level with ourselves. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." So that the text standeth good in all its length and breadth that all those who have won the everlasting victory were tempted, even as we are now.

III. Thirdly, let us notice THE SPECIAL POINT OF THE TRIAL. All these temptations, according to the connection of our text, were aimed at the faith of these holy men. Paul is writing of the victories and sufferings of faith, and therefore we are sure that these temptings were a test and trial of their faith. It is wonderful how God takes care that the victories of faith shall somehow or other be kept in mind. There was a period after the prophets had ceased to prophecy, and before Christ came, in which the Israelitish church had to contend against antichrist and other enemies. In the Apocrypha you have the account of some few of the martyrdoms of those who held fast to God and to his truth. They are not put in canonical Scripture, they neither belong to the Old Testament nor to the New; but here Paul immortalizes them, for the Lord will have them remembered. Those who were stoned and sawn asunder for the truth's sake, shall not be forgotten. If the details be not given they shall yet be recorded in the gross, on the sacred page. Since that time, dear friends, as if Paul had been writing prophecy rather than history, the people of God have had to pass through sufferings which if I were to repeat them now would break your hearts with grief, because of the horrors of cruelty which human ingenuity has invented. Man has seemed to turn into a devil, and sink below a fiend in the barbarities which he has perpetrated against the servants of God. All this has been aimed at the destruction of faith. The Jews were tempted to worship

idols: they must offer incense to a false god; but they would not. In after years Christians must pay homage to the image of the emperor; this they would not do, they would die a thousand deaths sooner than worship a false god. By-and-by they were called upon to deny the deity of Christ, and by tens of thousands they perished sooner than deny that fact. In later years it came to this—that they must submit to superstition; they must assert that they believed in transubstantiation, which they could not believe in, nor thus insult their God. They must submit themselves to men who said they were priests and could forgive their sins, which they felt was a forsaking of the great High Priest to think of doing; and so they died rather than deny the faith. The story of the lives of these heroes is recorded in such half-inspired books as Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," and the like. Read it, and let your children read it, till both they and you have learned fidelity to Christ.

The main point of the adversary's attack was always their faith; therefore let us learn where to set our guard. Let us see to it that we become strong in faith, for that is true strength. Feed your faith well. Know the truth, and know it thoroughly. Read the Scriptures, and understand them. Make sure of the eternal verities. Live much upon the promises of future bliss. A sight of the unfading crown will make you cheerfully forego the withering flowers of earth. The sorrows of the way will grow light as the eternal weight of glory is revealed. You will think less of the commendation or censure of men if your ear already hears the great Master saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

IV. I cannot dwell long on this point, though I had wished to do so, but must now call your attention, in the fourth place, to THE INTENSITY OF THIS TRIAL. That I gather from the position of our text, which is very strange. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, *were tempted*, were slain with sword. It has seemed to commentators to be so singular that to be "tempted" should be as it were sandwiched in between "sawn asunder" and being "slain with the sword," that they have thought there must be an error in the text. Certainly at the first blush the words look rather out of place, but they are not so. Some learned men have imagined another Greek word to be the correct one, since it involves a very slight alteration, and then the passage would run—"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were burnt, they were slain with the sword." I do not see any reason for desiring an alteration; it seems to me to be plain that the original is, "they were tempted," and what is written must stand. The more we think of it the more we shall see that being tempted is worthy to be put side by side with being sawn asunder, and being slain with the sword; for many of those who are daily tormented with temptations will tell you that it is as painful to bear as any form of death. If you live in a place where you hear little else but blasphemy from morning to night you will soon say, "I think I should prefer being in a prison to this. The cut of a whip or the wound of a sword would scarcely cause more pain than to hear the name of Jesus Christ profaned, and to see every holy and precious thing trampled on. When the ungodly persecute cruelly, as they can do even now without violating the law of man, they can tease and worry your very soul; they can embitter every morsel that you eat, make home to be a torture-

chamber, and the work-room an inquisition. They will maliciously track you in all your steps with jests, and jeers, and slanders, and hard speeches, and make you live like Marcus Arethusa, among the bees, which at last stung him to death. Believe me, some of God's people have found that to be tempted in that sense has been as bad as to be stoned, or to be slain with a sword: in fact, there are times when they have said, "If we could be taken out, and our heads could be smitten off at one stroke with a sword, it would be a happy release from this life-long agony." Alas for gentle, timid, loving spirits who have to endure such temptation.

I think Paul did well to put this here, not only because of the painfulness of it, but because of the danger of it, for it is certain that under temptation of the more insidious kind more professed Christians have been led away than ever were frightened from the faith by racks, or torments, or fear of death. It is a very sad fact that when Queen Mary died there were persons lying in prison condemned for heresy, who had some of them been great sufferers for the faith, and bold confessors of it, and yet when released they did not abide in their steadfastness. Queen Mary died and Elizabeth ascended the throne, and they obtained their liberty, and, alas, some of them, returning to the comforts of home, became altogether worldly persons, and forsook the faith for which once they would have even dared to die. I have known some unhappy cases of the same kind, where persons have been persecuted by their families for following Christ, and have stood up for him right manfully, so that I have felt great admiration for them for their consistent courage. I have lived to see these very individuals delivered from the yoke of bondage, able to start in life for themselves and to do exactly as they pleased, and, alas, soon after persecution ceased they have grown cold, and have forsaken the ways of God. What a strange creature is man! Lord, what a deceitful heart I have! O that thou wouldst search it and try it, lest it be so that I follow thee in stormy weather, but leave thee when the south wind blows. I think the apostle put in this clause just where we find it because more deadly to the church have been the blandishments of the world's wealth than all the ragings of her cruelty. Her stakes, her racks, her gibbets have never injured the church so much as her witcheries, her smiles, her fashions, and her patronage. Yet this was borne by saints of old, for "they were tempted."

Well, says one, you describe these Christian people as having had very hard times of it, for they were tempted, and tempted very severely too. Yes, it is true; but we do not pity one of them. If you saw those gallant men who wear the Victoria cross for valour, and you were told of their perils and sufferings, you would not pity them. They could not have worn the coveted cross given them by their Queen if they had not bravely endured hardship and peril. We do not pity men who have performed daring exploits, nor may we pity those servants of God who suffered the utmost cruelties, but now rest from their labours, and wear their honours in heaven. The question is—Can you aspire to take a place among them? To be a true Christian is no small thing, and before you pretend to be a follower of Jesus count the cost. Are you willing to endure temptation without yielding? Can you scorn the world's

bribe, and defy its threat? Will you set your face like a flint for Christ and holiness? Has grace made you a lion-like man? Have you a strong determination wrought in you by the Holy Ghost? If not, you may run well for a time, but you will turn back, and prove an apostate. I pray God that you may be of that noble stock which the Lord has chosen, and may have in you that noble nature which the Holy Spirit alone can impart, so that, though you shall be tempted, you shall hold out till life's latest hour, invincible through the grace of God.

I want, in conclusion, to answer the question which naturally arises—*Why then does God permit his people to encounter so much temptation?* Why is the road to heaven so beset with foes? I answer that there are a great many replies to that question, for the Lord answers many designs at one and the same time.

First, persecution and temptation are a sort of sieve, to sift the church of God. As it is, we have enough hypocrites among us, and if the way to heaven were strewn all along with loaves and fishes, we should have the devil himself going on pilgrimage. There must be these fiery persecutions, that the drossy hypocrites may be purged out. I warrant you there were not many hypocrites in the catacombs of Rome, when to be a Christian involved almost certain death. They crept into their assemblies at the dead of night, and there gathered to sing hymns to the name of Jesus, and few were the traitors' tongues which joined in the singing. When in our own country any man who had a Bible must die for it, and therefore men hid their Bibles behind the wainscot, or under the floor-boards, few were very eager for Bible-reading. The mocking, the jesting, the jeering which goes on in the world is the sieve constantly moving to shake off the chaff and let the good wheat remain. If we could stop that winnowing fan we should hardly wish to do so. I am sure if I could give some of you new converts a pass from here to heaven, so that nobody should ever laugh at you, and you should never suffer anything for Christ, I would not do it. I feel I should be doing you a serious injury if I could secure you against every trial. Think of a soldier when he enlists. Suppose he should say to the sergeant, "Sergeant, will you give me a guarantee that I shall never fight?" I think the officer would reply, "You had better not enlist." Even so I say to you, we cannot guarantee you that you shall not be tempted, and if you want such a guarantee as that you are not the kind of man we want: you are not the sort of man that is ever likely to win the crown unfading.

Trial and temptation also discover the reality of conversion. Look at this. Here is a man ridiculed for his religion and for his sobriety. He will not touch a drop of the drink which formerly cast him down to his destruction, and therefore his fellow-workmen laugh at him. All sorts of epithets are hurled at him while he is at work. He goes to a place of worship on the Sunday, and for this he must be jeered at to the last degree. Who is this man that bears this so patiently? Why, the very man who, twelve months ago, could drink as much as any of them, and used to jeer at others; the very man who for twenty years before never entered the house of God. Now, the fact that he can stand against temptation is one of the very best evidences that he is born again and made a new creature in Christ Jesus; and those who see such a change

confess that this is the finger of God. What else could have changed him so completely as to make him stand against the very thing which he himself took part in so short a time ago? We may thank God for the temptation, since it helps to evidence the reality of the conversion.

Again, it is by this that men are left without excuse, inasmuch as they refuse the light. I sometimes wonder why ungodly men cannot let Christian people alone. We do not interfere with you. Have we not as much right to do as we like as you have to do what *you* like? But no; the moment a Christian appears among working men they are all upon him as though they were so many dogs worrying a hare. What does this show but that they know the truth and hate it? They know the light, but would fain quench it, and therefore they put from them the candle which God sends to them. They treat his blessing as if it were a curse. Did you ever read in the Scriptures of God's thinking better of men than they deserved? No, say you, that cannot be. Yes, but there is a case, a parabolical case, of course, where the Lord is represented as judging men too easily. "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, they will reverence my son." But they did not reverence him, they took the heir and slew him and cast him out of the vineyard.

There are people of God who are naturally so amiable, kind, and good that you feel sure all must love and esteem them, and yet because of their religion even such must be persecuted. The beloved brother cannot escape without sarcasm, the dear sister that was everything before must now be made the subject of jeers, and the husband or the wife however much beloved is not spared. This leaves the ungodly altogether without excuse; it is God's purpose that it should do so.

Meanwhile, it does saints good; for painful as it is to them, it drives them to prayer. Many a man lives near to God in prayer who would not have done so if he had enjoyed an easier position. His prayerfulness strengthens him; his having to summon divine aid to sustain him under trial makes him grow in faith and in every grace, and he becomes a better Christian.

I believe that persecution is overruled by God for displaying the work of the divine Spirit. Men see in Christian patience, in Christian fortitude, in Christian courage, and in Christian zeal what the Holy Ghost can work even in such poor raw material as our human nature is. God is magnified by the successful struggling of his people out of love to his name.

Moreover, brethren, the life of the church is the life of Christ extended and drawn out in his people. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," yet he "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," and if we keep close to Christ we must expect to share his lot. Ours should be the prolonged echoes of the music of Christ's life, "linked sweetness long drawn out." Oh that God would help us till Christ himself shall come to keep up the blessed strain!

It seems to me the trials and the temptations of this life are all making us fit for the life to come—building up a character for eternity. You have been in a piano manufactory: did you ever go there for the sake of music? Go into the tuning room, and you will say, "My dear sir, this is a dreadful place to be in; I cannot bear it; I thought you made music here." They say, "No, we do not produce music here, we make

the instruments, and tune them here, and in the process much discord is forthcoming." Such is the church of God on earth. The Lord makes the instruments down here, and tunes them, and a great deal of discord is easily perceptible, but it is all necessary to prepare us for the everlasting harmonies up yonder. Have you thought what a wonderful creature a man is—a perfect man, made fit to dwell in heaven—he is the last product of divine wisdom, the noblest work of God. There is an angel, he is perfectly holy, but he never knew what sin was, and there is little wonder that he clings to that which has been his nature these many centuries: besides, he is not encumbered by a body of dust, full of passions and appetites, which are the inlets of sin. But here is a being with a soul encumbered with materialism, and it has known sin, known it terribly, and yet it is for ever bound to do right beyond fear of turning aside. How is this to be achieved? Take away its free agency, says one. No, that would spoil it; it would be no longer a man if free agency were destroyed. This being is perfectly free to do whatever he pleases throughout eternity, and yet he will never wish to do a wrong thing again. It is a wonderful work for God to fashion such a creature. He begins to do it in regeneration, and continues the work in sanctification; and all the endurance of trial, and all the patience manifested by the tried ones, work together to prepare a character which can endure the strain of everlasting bliss, and perform the holy service incident thereto. I speak for every Christian man here: I am to stand one day so near to God that between him and me there will be but one person, and that person the Lord Jesus Christ, my Lord and Mediator. I am in Christ to have dominion over all the works of God's hands, and to be crowned with glory and honour. Angels are to be my servants, and heaven my inheritance. Shall I never grow proud? Shall no self-exaltation creep in? No; the character will be fixed for holiness as though graven in eternal brass, and yet the man will be free. It may be that all the afflictions and temptations which God permits to pass over us here below are forming us for eternal bliss. Thus is the corn ripening for the garner, the fruit mellowing for the basket. Here the graving-tool and the hammer bring out the beauties which shall shine in the courts of the Lord for ever, when of us also the record will be written, "they were tempted."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 674, 852.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A POWERFUL REASON FOR COMING TO CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21ST, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him."—Mark iii. 8.

THE opposition of the great ones of the earth did not, after all, hinder the cause of Christ. The Pharisees, who were the leaders of religious thought, combined with the Herodians, who were the court party, to destroy Jesus; but at the very moment when their wrath had reached its highest pitch the crowd about the Saviour's person was greater than ever. Let us not, therefore, dear friends, be at all dismayed if great men and learned men, and nominally religious men, should oppose the simple gospel of Christ. All the world is not bound up in a Pharisee's phylactery, nor held in chains by a philosopher's new fancy. If some will not have our Saviour, others will: God's eternal purpose will stand, and the kingdom of his Anointed shall come. If our Lord Jesus be rejected by the great, nevertheless the common people hear him gladly. To the poor the gospel is preached, and it is his joy and his delight that out of them he still gathers a company who, though poor in this world, are rich in faith, and give glory to God. I would have you, beloved, count upon opposition, and regard it as a token of coming blessing. Dread not the black cloud, it does but prognosticate a shower. March may howl and bluster, and April may damp all things with its rains, but the May flowers and the autumn's harvest of varied fruits will come, and come by this very means. Go on and serve your God in the serenity of holy confidence and you shall live to see that the hand of the Lord is not to be turned back, though the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together.

Those who came to Christ in such great multitudes did not all come from right motives, and I shall not assume that they did. Some came from idle curiosity, no doubt: others came to listen to what he had to say, but were not prepared to believe in him. We know that many came to be fed with loaves and fishes, swayed by the most mercenary motives. Still, in the case now under notice large numbers came to Jesus because they had heard of the great things which he did, hoping that he would do something of the same kind for them; for multitudes of those who came were sick folk, plague-smitten, stricken with disease,

and they came that by touching him they might be delivered from all their sufferings. This boon they gained, and glorified the name of the Lord. I shall not, therefore, stay to divide out the characters which made up the crowd, but remind you that we must never expect that all who come to hear the gospel will receive it. Just as Jesus went up into the mountain, and there called out to himself whom he would, so does he form his church, which is an assembly of called out ones, whom the sovereign Lord selects from the congregation of hearers that they may become a church of believers. The process of selection and separation is always going on, and the great heap which lies on the threshing floor is being daily winnowed to divide the golden grain from the worthless chaff. For our present purpose only we shall just now view those who literally came to Christ as the types of those who come spiritually. Many, I trust, who are present at this time will come to Jesus for the same reason that these people came, namely, because they have heard of the great things which have been done by him. So to our work at once.

Three things are before us. The first is *the attraction*,—"They had heard what great things he did:" secondly, *the gathering*—"They came unto him"; and thirdly, the context furnishes us with this, *the result* of the attraction and the gathering. We find it written "He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues."

I. Here is the ATTRACTION—"*they had heard what great things he did.*" My dear hearers, the case of these people is parallel with your own. There must be very few of you here but what have heard of the great things which Jesus Christ has done.

Let us note, first, that *these people had heard with somewhat of a believing ear.* Stories floated about concerning one who had healed blindness, palsy, leprosy; and they accepted the statements as facts. A lame man told how he had been made to leap like a hart, and a blind man declared that his eyes had been opened, and as these wonders passed from mouth to mouth these people believed them to be true. I know that even those of you who are not converted yet believe what is recorded in these four Gospels concerning the miracles that Jesus wrought. You are persuaded that the records are authentic; you believe that the Lord Jesus did heal the sick, and that he did even raise the dead and cast out devils. You also accept the grand gospel statement that he is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him. Believing so much as that, you ought to believe a good deal more, and I pray the Holy Spirit now to lead you to that further faith. If you have come as far as that, the most reasonable thing to do is to go to him with your own case and trust him to heal *you.* I am persuaded that I may go very far with many here present in a statement of their beliefs. You believe that Jesus Christ has done great spiritual wonders for multitudes. You have been told of great sinners whose hard hearts have been softened, whose characters have been changed, whose lives have been renewed, whose sins have been forgiven. You have met with such, have you not? The deed of grace was performed upon your own brother, perhaps, or upon some intimate friend, or some person of public notoriety. You know many such cases, and you believe them to be [redacted]uine wonders of grace. You do not think that conversion is all a

delusion; you have not reached that degree of unbelief. Indeed, instead of unbelief, you are filled with ardent admiration and feel a measure of desire to be yourself saved; and while sitting in this house you have often said, "Yes, I believe it is so. Oh that the mighty grace of God would renew me, and that I could touch the hem of the Saviour's garment that he might save even me." Believing so much as you do, you ought in all reason to believe more. I mean you should go on to trust him who has wrought these great things, and place your own case in his hands and leave it there. This is the legitimate course to pursue. A man believes a certain medicine to have wrought great cures, and he knows that he himself is sick of the disease which it is meant to heal; why, it seems as if no one needs to say, "The next step is that you should try that medicine upon yourself." Yet it grieves me that so many of you do not proceed to this saving point, but linger on the borders of faith. You see the river of the water of life, and wish to drink, for you are sure that it would quench your thirst, and yet you are in danger of perishing in sight of the flowing stream. O, Holy Spirit, remove the madness of sin, and teach men true wisdom.

The many who came to Jesus felt themselves drawn because they had heard of the great things which he had done and believed them; they proceeded, however, to the second step which I have already indicated, for *they drew from what they had heard an argument of hope.* They said, "Has he done these great things to others? Why should he not work the same gracious miracles upon us?" The palsied man said, "He that was sick as I am has been recovered; surely, if I could get near to Jesus, and could catch his eye, he would restore *me.*" The blind said, "He healed one like myself: oh, if I could but sit where he passes by I would cry, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me,' and he would open my eyes too." They could not be at once sure that he would heal them, for that he works a cure in one is not in itself a proof that he will work upon another; but they were further informed that he delighted in mercy, and that he was gentle and gracious, and easily entreated, and therefore they concluded that if such an One had power to work such beneficent miracles, and evidently had a will to work them, they had but to come to him and they would be partakers of his healing power. O that my unconverted hearers would act reasonably at this time, and draw a like conclusion. I pray you, dear friends, see how sensible these people were, that you may imitate them. To me it seems as plain as the working out of a proposition in mathematics. Jesus has saved such as I am, therefore he can save me. To believe in him is as reasonable an act as to eat that which is good when you know it is good, and know that you need it; or to drink that which quenches thirst, when you perceive that it is suitable for that purpose, and that you are in need of drink. O that your hearts would say,—Jesus Christ has wrought great deeds of grace; he is evidently willing to work more; let me, then, come to him and trust myself in his hands. If this be a time of cool, collected thought, and the Holy Spirit work in us wisdom, it will again happen that "A great multitude, when they had heard of the great things which Jesus did, came unto him."

One more step should be mentioned. *No doubt these persons were partly urged to come to him by their own sad condition.* Some of them

were full of pain through bodily plagues, and others suffered poverty and wretchedness through being blind, halt, lame, or withered, and they were anxious to be delivered from their infirmity and the poverty which came of it. Being convinced that their cases were similar to those which had been healed by Christ, they felt an eager desire to see what he could do for them. Now, I know that I may call my hearers to Christ till I lose my voice, but none will come but those who feel that they need him; but, my dear unconverted hearers, you do need him whether you know it or not. There is a disease upon you which has already brought you down to spiritual death, and will bring you down to hell ere long. The most moral of you, the most amiable of you, unless Jesus shall look upon you in love, is carrying about within himself a plague of the heart which will be your eternal ruin; Jesus must save you, or you are lost. There is no hope for any man among you except it come from him. Do you know this? If so, come at once to the Saviour. Do you not know it? Then believe it to be so, for so it is, and let the conviction lead you to seek his face.

But, recollect, these people did not *only* come because they were sick, or because they felt they were sick, for they had long known and felt their sicknesses, and had remained at home, or had resorted to other physicians, or to Bethesda's pool, or to some other famous fount. They came to Jesus because, knowing and feeling their need, they also perceived that Jesus was able to meet their case. Come then to Christ, O my sin-stricken hearer, because, be your condition what it may, he can meet it. Are you troubled with hardness of heart? By his Spirit he can take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Is your difficulty unbelief? You cannot see the truth, but the Lord Jesus can open the eyes of him that was born blind. Is it a case of want of power? Is your hand withered? The Lord can bid the withered hand be stretched out, and it shall be done. It is not possible that there should be any moral or spiritual disease about any one of you that will baffle the power of my great Lord and Master. If you do but come to him he can and will make you every whit whole. He has already dealt with cases like yours, as bad as yours, as desperate as yours: in the record of his cures there are instances parallel to your own, and some which even surpass them in difficulty. Depend on it, he is able to do again what he has already done, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, he can reach as far as sin can go, and draw back those whom Satan has driven to the pit's mouth. Now, be reasonable, and act upon this fact. May the Spirit of God lead you in the way of understanding, and then you will say to-day, "I also will join that multitude who, having heard of the great things which Jesus did, came to him." God grant it may be so: yea, he will grant it, for his word shall not return unto him void.

II. Secondly, I shall ask you to think of THE GATHERING. We have seen the attraction, now let us see what it drew together. "They came unto him." Observe, then, that *hearing did not content them.* I wish I could say this of all my hearers. These people heard the story of what Christ had done, and I should not wonder but what they said, "It is good news; rehearse it in our ears a second time." They were told that he had opened the eyes of a blind man, and a blind man who heard it

cried out, "Gladsome tidings: tell me that again." I should not wonder if that blind man went many times to the house of the person who reported the cure, and said, "Tell me again of this matter." The woman, too, who was sick with internal disease, said, "You told us of one that was healed; tell us of that marvel again." Yes, but what would you have thought if they had kept on week after week, saying, "Tell us that story! tell us that story!" and then had gone home and said, "We feel so much better: we feel comforted by hearing this good news"? What fools they would have been to have been satisfied with a mere report of other people's cures, without going to the great Physician to obtain healing for themselves. Did you not sing the other day,

"Tell me the story often,
For I forget so soon,
The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon"?

Why should you be told that tale so often? Will you never draw the inference that Jesus is able to save *you*, and will you never go to him *for yourselves?* I am afraid that some of you are getting satisfied with coming to the Tabernacle, and that you are beginning to think, "There is hope for me; I always hear the word of God; I am a regular hearer of the gospel of Jesus." Yes, but that is not it. Those who are hearers only are not blessed in the deed. A hungry man hears that there is bread given away to the poor, and he says, "Tell me where the food is given and on what terms, and I will hasten to get it, for I am famished." Do you think the poor starving wretch will stop here a week, and be refreshed by merely hearing about bread? Not he; he will die if he does that. He may perhaps ask again for information and say, "Tell me once more; give me plain directions where to go, and I will hasten to be fed as others have been;" but he will not expect to fill his empty stomach with merely hearing the news; he is not so stupid as that. I am compelled to feel that some of you are very short of sense when you are dealing with your souls. Why, some of you might almost sing:—

Tell me the same old story,
Though you have cause to fear
That I shall miss of glory,
And die with grace so near.

O that this fooling would come to an end: think me not harsh, I am but honest; it is fooling, and nothing better, to go on hearing the word and refusing to obey its call. May God's grace lead you to come to Jesus at once. O do not be hearers only. Turn your faces Christward, and accept his great salvation.

Observe, next, that *these people did not wait until Jesus came to them.* That we are to wait till Jesus comes to us is a common error: a sort of orthodox wickedness, a rebellious unbelief dressed out as humble submissiveness. I have known this preached,—that we are to wait at the pool of the ordinances, in the hope that one of these days the angel may trouble the pool and we shall step in. Those who talk so are not as a rule the most successful of soul-winners, and that fact reminds me of a story I have heard of a Scotchman who had attended the ministry of an episcopal personage for some years. At last Donald forsook the

episcopal church, and when he was missed the pastor came to him. "Why don't you come to the church, Donald?" "Because I want to be saved; and I get no good with you." "Ah," said the bishop, "you should wait at the pool." "I have been waiting at the pool a long time," said Donald, "a very long while, and no good has come of it." "But, Donald, you know the man who waited was healed at last." "Ah, well, sir, but he had some encouragement, for he saw some step in before him, but all these years that I have waited at your pool I have never seen one step in yet, and therefore I will wait no longer." Donald was right; no man can afford to run so terrible a risk as to remain in disobedience in the bare hope of some unpromised salvation. The gospel narrative does not teach us to wait at the pool. I want to call particular attention to that fact. See you the crowd lying around the pool of Bethesda? What did Jesus do when he came walking along that morning through the five porches? Listen, ye sick folk, waiting still at the pool. Does he say, "Wait patiently"? Not a word of it; but, singling out a man who was among the most despairing, he said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." That is the gospel. It is a divine command to believe and live. Our Lord comes here at this moment by his gospel, and he does not say to you, "Wait, wait, wait," but, "Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Believe in Jesus now, for he that believeth in him hath everlasting life. Look to him and be saved. The gospel which is preached in your ears is a voice from Jesus himself, attended by his own divine power, and if you feel it to be such, you will obey it, and you shall find salvation now, and wait no longer. These people did not stop till Jesus journeyed into their own regions, but when they heard what great things he did, they came unto him. May you be led of the Spirit to do the same.

Note, again, that *these people did not stop at his disciples.* Satan tries to keep men from Christ by pointing them to ministers, evangelists, or other eminent believers. Persons are impressed under a sermon, and they say, "I should like to speak with some Christian man." That is very good, but after all it is not the thing which is commanded by the gospel. You are to believe in the Master, and it will not suffice to speak to the servants. "But I would like to go into the enquiry room," says one. Very well, I do not condemn that action, but the best enquiry room for a seeking sinner is his own bedchamber, where he seeks the Lord at once, with no one between him and his Redeemer. Why, if you could pick out the most earnest and thoughtful divines that ever lived, and you could have twelve of them locked up at home, so that you might go and talk to them all day and all night long, it would not be worth one bad farthing to you, and it might even be an injury to you, if it kept you from going straight to Jesus Christ. There is no salvation in men, and ministers must not be mistaken for priests. I shake off the thought of being a priest as Paul shook off the viper from his hand. I have often said I would sooner be called devil than "priest" if by that word is meant that I have any priesthood beyond that which belongs to all my fellow Christians, or any power to forgive sin, or to impart grace. My ministry is for the extolling of Jesus, and not for the magnifying of myself and my brethren. I dare not say, "Behold the priesthood! Behold the church! Behold the sacraments!" My one business is to cry,

Behold the Lamb of God." I point you away from all ministries to esus Christ the minister of the new covenant, who alone can save your ›uls. These people were wise in not staying at the disciples, for they ›uld not meet their varied needs. They did not rest in the society of he Virgin mother, nor in that of Peter, or James, or John, but they astened at once to the Lord Jesus himself to touch his blessed person or themselves. In this I would have you all imitate them. O that you rould

> "Steal away, steal away to Jesus,
> Steal away home;
> For Jesus waits to save you."

To no one else but Jesus go, for the great things that *He* did, and not he poor things that such worms as we are can ever do, should raise hope n your bosoms.

Observe again that *these people who came to Jesus in such crowds must ave left their business.* I do not know what became of their farms, their live gardens, their cattle, their shops, but they certainly left them to ourney to Jesus. We do not commend any man for neglecting his usiness and daily calling; but I will say this, that when a man's soul is ot saved he cannot be blamed if he neglects everything till it is. That woman who came out in the morning with her waterpot to draw ater from the well was doing a very useful and proper action, for I dare ay those at home needed water to drink; but after she had heard Christ peak, it is written, "The woman left her waterpot." Some of those t home may have said, "Where is the water, mistress?" But she ould reply, "I have not thought of the poor waterpot. Come, see a an that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" h, if you do leave your waterpots to find Christ you may very well be xcused. O working man in soul trouble, if you are out with a cart and he horse should stand still in the street while you breathed a prayer for alvation, who could blame you? If the engine paused while the stoker ried for mercy, or the shuttle lingered while the weaver begged for ardon, would there not be a justifiable excuse? If the shop shutters ere kept up for an hour later than usual while the tradesman sought he Saviour, yea, if the business of the senate-house stood still, and all he commerce of a nation stayed while but one soul sought Christ, ; were worth while; for what human business can equal the salva- ion of the souls of men? Elections occupy men's thoughts just ow; but what are all these compared with making your calling and lection sure? You are candidates for heaven, and there is more im- ortance in eternal election than in all other elections under heaven, for hen everything else shall have passed away this must endure. See to he one thing needful, with Mary, even if you do for awhile neglect what Iartha thinks to be the urgent demands of the household. Let your rst care be for your soul, "For what shall it profit a man if he gain he whole world and lose his own soul?"

Many of these people, too, came from a great distance. Some came om the south, from Judea; others came from the north, from Tyre id Sidon; some from across the river Jordan; others from the hills of dom. Rough roads and deep rivers could not keep those back who solved to come to Christ. O souls, if you want Christ, let nothing hinder

you. If there were seven hells between a soul and Christ it were worth while for it to force its way through all their fires to get at him; for when you get at him there is salvation and eternal life. Rest not, I pray you, till over all impediments you have forced a way. There is a plenitude of mercy about our Lord Jesus which will well reward you for pressing towards him. Oh, get to my Master, however far off you may be, for the sight of him will well repay the weary journey. I delight to see the holy ingenuity of anxious minds when they are eager to find the Saviour: they will do anything to obtain salvation. I remember that years ago when Bibles were not so common as they are now, a very, very poor man, who was impressed with his need of Christ, longed to read the Word of God, and therefore he went to a shop to ask the price of a second-hand Bible—the cheapest, the oldest they had on hand. "Ah," said he, as he shook his head, "I have not money enough to buy it, but I will take great care of it if you will lend it to me from Saturday night till Monday morning: you won't miss the sale of it, and I may read a part of it." As soon as he gained the friendly loan he gave himself up to the precious book till the moment he had to return it, and so sought to find Christ. Ah, you have Bibles, some of you half-a-dozen of them, but you never look at them; the dust on the unread books condemns you; you take no trouble to reach the Saviour. God save you from this carelessness, and may you resolve to come to Jesus whoever may oppose. Be eager to listen to his gospel, though you may have far to go to hear it, and may have roughly squeezed in the crowd. When you hear the gospel, cry to the Lord God for his blessing upon it: though dark thoughts may gather, and Satan may try to thrust you back, be not removed from your purpose. Make a push for heaven and holiness. Never does the Lord work in any man a firm resolution to find the Saviour and yet allow him to perish.

One thing I want to call very particular attention to, it is this, *these poor people came to Jesus with all their ailments about them.* I know they did, because we read that they pressed upon him to touch him, and he made them whole. Now, suppose they had said, "We will not come till we are recovered," then, of course, they needed not to come at all, and our Lord would have been a superfluity to them. But no: he that was blind came blind, he who was lame hobbled as best he could, and he who was palsied came shaking and trembling; but they did come. The poor people who had all sorts of dire complaints, even those who had devils in in them, came just as they were. That is the point to which I would bring every man here who has not come to Christ: you are to come just as you are. Are you a drunkard? You have to give up the drink, but you must come to him as you are to help you to give it up. Have you lived in uncleanness of life? Come and trust in Christ, unclean as you are: trust him to make you pure. Have you been dishonest? Come to him as dishonest, that he may make you honest. Do not attempt to make yourself fit for salvation, for it is clear that no one is so fit for saving as the lost, no one so fit for washing as the foul, no one so fit for healing as the sick. Come to the Saviour; come just as you are. Catch the spirit of the hymn,—

> "Come needy and guilty, come loathsome and bare;
> You can't come too filthy; come just as you are."

If you think that it is needful to begin the work yourself, what is that but to insinuate that the Lord Jesus cannot do anything till *you* have started the work? Would you have it to be supposed that he is not quite up to the mark, and needs help from *you?* Is he so poor a Saviour that he is nothing till you enable him to work? Think not so, but come along. You have heard what great things he has done; come, then, to him even now, that the same great things may be wrought in you.

III. I will not say much upon the third point, which is THE RESULT. Of all that came to our Lord, multitudes though they were, *not one was ever repulsed:* no, not one. Since the world began has one soul been driven away from the Saviour's door? Oh, tell ye it in Gath, publish it in the streets of Askelon, if ever Christ shall be found casting out a sinner, for then may the adversary justly rejoice over the defeat of the gospel. Let it ring down the corridors of hell, and let every devil dance for joy as he hears that Christ has broken his promise, and is untrue to his character, whenever you hear of one who comes to him whom he casts out. I challenge all time; I challenge heaven, and earth, and hell, to bring a case in which my Lord and Master ever cast out a soul that put its trust in him. It cannot be.

As none were repulsed, so *all were healed;* and even so all who now believe in Christ are healed of sin and its plagues. "Ah," say objectors, "you preach faith as the way of salvation." We confess the charge; and glory in it, since it is most true that it does save men. "But you ought to bid people do good works in order to salvation." See here, good sir; if the people who believe in Jesus do not perform good works, and if this faith does not make them moral, honest, sober, holy people, then we grant your point: but who shall assert that the doctrine of faith is other than purifying and sanctifying when we can bring multitudes of proofs that this very preaching up of faith and not of works is the most effective cause of virtue and holiness? Those who cry "Works, works, works," have generally but a scant supply of such wares. Remember the age of Laud and his popish preaching. Who were the followers of that theology but the libidinous cavaliers? Those who preached salvation by grace,—pray, who were they but the godliest men in the nation, the Puritans, against whom no man could bring any charge save that they were too sternly good, and kept the Sabbath too precisely, and walked before God with too much gravity? I wish the same fault could be found with us all. If that be vile, we purpose to be viler still.

> "Talk we of morals, oh! thou bleeding Lamb;
> The grand morality is love of thee."

How can this divine morality of love be wrought in us unless the Lord Jesus by his Holy Spirit bestows upon us a heart to trust him, and to take him and him alone to be our salvation?

One thing I cannot help mentioning, and that is, as every one that came to Christ was healed, it followed that *the attraction grew.* Say there had been five hundred healed; then when the people came and a hundred more were benefited there were six hundred to draw; and the next day if there were a hundred more healed, there were seven hundred

to attract others. Now, there never was a time since the world began when there were so many reasons for a sinner's coming to Christ as there are this morning. Just think of it. Every soul whom the Lord has saved is another argument that he is able to save *me*. In reasoning philosophically, if we find a fact we put it down; but we do not dare to draw any inference from it, because an isolated fact cannot prove a general rule. When we get two or three dozen facts, we say, "The common inference from all these is so and so," and a rule is proven. Suppose we could collect two or three hundreds of such facts, then we are sure. Now, for eighteen hundred years and more our Lord Jesus Christ has gone on saving sinners; and he has saved more sinners at this moment than ever before. Still they are coming, still they are coming, and still he is saving them, and every one of these is an argument that *you* should come. O my dear hearer, where are you—the man whom God means to bless under this sermon? Come at once and say, "I, too, will trust him with my soul, for he has power to save me." Then shall another be added to the long roll of his wonderful cures. The Lord grant it may be so, and his shall be the praise.

I desire now to spend a few minutes in real, hard, earnest work, in which may God the Holy Spirit help me, while I plead with those who have never come to Jesus, that they should come to him at once. My dear hearer, if you have often heard about what Christ has done, and yet have never come to him yourself that he might work a similar work of love in you, I pray you be not hindered any longer. First, come, because *his very name invites you*,—Jesus, a Saviour. You are sinful; but he has forgiveness. Come to him. You will be well met, a sinner and a Saviour. Can two more congruous things come together? His name is Christ, too; that is, Anointed. Now, God has anointed him with power to save, and commissioned him to save, and he must and will discharge his high office by saving those who come to him. It is his business to save, and you may be sure that he wears no empty title, and makes no vain pretence of being what he is not. Come along, then; come along to him who is a real Saviour for real sinners. He is a Saviour commissioned of God, commit your soul's business to his care. I say the name he bears rings out like a silver bell, and this is its note, "Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ!"

Our Lord's power should also encourage you to come to him. Of that I have already spoken. Nothing has ever baffled him yet. Stormy winds and raging waves obey him; the very devils flee before him. Come along with you. He is mighty to save; therefore come and hang the whole weight of your souls upon him.

Next, *let his character allure you.* There was never such a mass of love as Jesus is; he speaks no harsh word to coming sinners: he giveth them mercy liberally and upbraideth not. Hath he not said, "I will receive them graciously and love them freely"? Oh, come to Jesus. I am not calling you to Moses with the broken fragments of the law at his feet thundering in indignation; I invite you to Jesus with his pierced hands and open side entreating souls to come to him.

Come to Jesus because God has made *it his glory to pardon sinners.* Constantine had a son whom he much loved, and he wished the nation to honour him; and so while his son was yet a child he caused him

to sign pardons, and charters, so that all gracious acts of the king bore the prince's signature. The Prince Emmanuel signs and seals divine pardons for the chief of sinners: and the great God in heaven loves that his Son should give pardon to sinners, for it endears him to men and brings him honour. Since it will honour him to save you, come to him and be not afraid.

Again, let me remind you of *the preparations* that are made for saving sinners. Christ has died to save them, he shed his blood to save them, and do you think he will have these preparations wasted? I smiled last night at a little incident in my own home. Three of our friends had been writing hard for me all day, and my wife expecting them to tea had spread the table bountifully, and adorned it with choice flowers. I came into the room and said, "They cannot stop to tea, for there is a meeting at the Orphanage, and they say they must hurry off." I confess I felt sorry as I looked at the table and all its adornments. My own good wife replied, "No, no; they cannot go; they must have their tea. I cannot spread a table like this and nobody to come and eat. Go out and fetch in those highwaymen who want to run off: compel them to come in." I fetched them in, and they were by no means loth to sit down and partake. It would have been a great disappointment to the kind hostess if no one had eaten what she had provided. This is a homely story, but it sets forth the need there is that our Lord's provisions of grace should be used. He has spread a table, and he will have sinners come and feed at it. What did the king say who made a wedding-feast for his son? "Go out quickly into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Thus the wedding was furnished with guests. Queer guests they were, and yet they furnished the feast with guests; they were odd bits of furniture, but they were needful: a wedding with a feast and nobody to eat it would be a dishonour to the king, so that guests were necessary furniture. Oh you that are furthest off from God, my Master's mercy wants your misery that he may relieve it: he needs your emptiness that he may impart of his fulness, and grace for grace.

One thing more I have to say. I cannot tell if it will have power with anybody present, but I hope it may. I wish you would come to Jesus even *for his servant's sake.* If I were a sculptor fashioning a statue I should feel that every stroke I took made a permanent impression, so that if I only wrought a little upon the hard stone I should make some progress, and my work would remain. Alas! my labour is not thus abiding in reference to some of you. I do my best each Sunday, but I am not much the forwarder, for you seem to be statues of ice, and the six week-days melt away my one day's work. It is weary work thus to labour in vain.

A painter takes his brush, and though he may be executing a very difficult portrait, yet every stroke tells, each tint and touch of colour denotes progress. Alas! I seem as if I wrote on the sand with some of you; the week's tide obliterates the Sabbath's marks. Am I always thus to weave in the pulpit that which is undone at home? You do not know how sadly we sometimes say to our Master, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We would give anything to see our hearers converted, that our Master might

have honour, and we are sad when men come not at our call. If we see no souls brought to the Redeemer's feet we are ready to lie down and die. I read the other day of an old minister who had been some twenty years without a conversion, as far as he knew, and yet he was a really earnest man. At last, having much prayed over it, he announced that he should preach no more in that place, but resign his charge, and the reason he gave them with many tears was, "I am doing no good among you, there are no souls saved, and perhaps if another minister filled my place you might listen to his appeals. At any rate, I will not stand in the way of one who might be more useful, and so I bid you farewell." As he went out an old woman named Sarah said, "O, sir, you cannot go, for you were the means of leading me to Christ some three or four years ago." "You," he said, "Sarah, I thought you were one who did not care for my ministry." "Oh, sir," said she, "it has been my meat and my drink." "Woman," said he, "why did you not tell me as much before? My heart has been breaking for you." In the course of the week twenty or thirty came in to testify that they had sought and found the Saviour through his ministry. All he could do was to say, "Bless the Lord, I'll not leave my post; but why did you not tell me of it before? O the sleepless nights I might have missed if you had but told me." Some of you may have been saved, and yet you have never confessed the blessed fact, and I put it to you, whether you do well and kindly by his servant thus to rob him of his wages and keep back comforting news from his burdened heart.

However, that may pass. You who have not sought, and have not found, my Lord, what message shall I take home this morning to my Master when I go upstairs to speak with him alone? Shall I tell him you will not believe on him? I set him before you once again as able to save you, will you again refuse him? Or shall the message be that you will trust in him for salvation? God grant that you may give a wise reply for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—259, 522, 508.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FOLLOWING THE RISEN CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 28TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."—Colossians iii. 1, 2.

THE resurrection of our divine Lord from the dead is the corner-stone of Christian doctrine. Perhaps I might more accurately call it the key-stone of the arch of Christianity, for if that fact could be disproved the whole fabric of the gospel would fall to the ground. If Jesus Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins. If Christ be not risen, then they which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and we ourselves, in missing so glorious a hope as that of resurrection, are of all men the most miserable.

Because of the great importance of his resurrection, our Lord was pleased to give many infallible proofs of it, by appearing again and again in the midst of his followers. It would be interesting to search out how many times he appeared; I think we have mention of some sixteen manifestations. He showed himself openly before his disciples, and did eat and drink with them. They touched his hands and his side, and heard his voice, and knew that it was the same Jesus that was crucified. He was not content with giving evidence to the ears and to the eyes, but even to the sense of touch he proved the reality of his resurrection. These appearances were very varied. Sometimes he gave an interview to one alone, either to a man, as to Cephas, or to a woman, as to Magdalen. He conversed with two of his followers as they went to Emmaus, and with the company of the apostles by the sea. We find him at one moment amongst the eleven when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, and at another time in the midst of an assembly of more than five hundred brethren, who years after were most of them living witnesses to the fact. They could not all have been deceived. It is not possible that any historical fact could have been placed upon a better basis of credibility than the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. This is put beyond all dispute and question, and of purpose is it so done, because it is essential to the whole Christian system.

For this same cause the resurrection of Christ is commemorated frequently. There is no ordinance in Scripture of any one Lord's-day in the year being set apart to commemorate the rising of Christ from the dead, for this reason, that every Lord's-day is the memorial of our Lord's resurrection. Wake up any Lord's-day you please, whether in the depth of winter, or in the warmth of summer, and you may sing:—

"To day he rose and left the dead,
And Satan's empire fell;
To day the saints his triumph spread,
And all his wonders tell."

To set apart an Easter Sunday for special memory of the resurrection is a human device, for which there is no Scriptural command, but to make every Lord's-day an Easter Sunday is due to him who rose early on the first day of the week. We gather together on the first rather than upon the seventh day of the week, because redemption is even a greater work than creation, and more worthy of commemoration, and because the rest which followed creation is far outdone by that which ensues upon the completion of redemption. Like the apostles, we meet on the first day of the week, and hope that Jesus may stand in our midst, and say, "Peace be unto you." Our Lord has lifted the Sabbath from the old and rusted hinges whereon the law had placed it long before, and set it on the new golden hinges which his love has fashioned. He hath placed our rest-day, not at the end of a week of toil, but at the beginning of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Every first day of the week we should meditate upon the rising of our Lord, and seek to enter into fellowship with him in his risen life.

Never let us forget that all who are in him rose from the dead in his rising. Next in importance to the fact of the resurrection is the doctrine of the federal headship of Christ, and the unity of all his people with him. It is because we are in Christ that we become partakers of everything that Christ did,—we are circumcised with him, dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, because we cannot be separated from him. We are members of his body, and not a bone of him can be broken. Because that union is most intimate, continuous, and indissoluble, therefore all that concerns him concerns us, and as he rose so all his people have arisen in him.

They are risen in two ways. First, representatively. All the elect rose in Christ in the day when he quitted the tomb. He was justified, or declared to be clear of all liabilities on account of our sins, by being set free from the prison-house of the tomb. There was no reason for detaining him in the sepulchre, for he had discharged the debts of his people by dying 'unto sin once.' He was our hostage and our representative, and when he came forth from his bonds we came forth in him. We have endured the sentence of the law in our Substitute, we have lain in its prison, and even died under its death-warrant, and now we are no longer under its curse. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Next to this representative resurrection comes our spiritual resurrection, which is ours as soon as we are led by faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Then it my be said of us, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

The resurrection blessing is to be perfected by-and-by at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, for then our bodies shall rise again, if we fall asleep before his coming. He redeemed our manhood in its entirety, spirit, soul, and body, and he will not be content until the resurrection which has passed upon our spirit shall pass upon our body too. These dry bones shall live; together with his dead body they shall rise.

"When he arose ascending high,
He showed our feet the way;
Up to the Lord our flesh shall fly
At the great rising day."

Then shall we know in the perfection of our resurrection beauty that we are indeed completely risen in Christ, and "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This morning we shall only speak of our fellowship with Christ in his resurrection as to our own spiritual resurrection. Do not misunderstand me as if I thought the resurrection to be only spiritual, for a literal rising from the dead is yet to come; but our text speaks of spiritual resurrection, and I shall therefore endeavour to set it before you.

I. First, then, LET US CONSIDER OUR SPIRITUAL RISING WITH CHRIST: "If ye then be risen with Christ." Though the words look like a supposition they are not meant to be so. The apostle casts no doubt, and raises no question, but merely puts it thus for argument's sake. It might just as well be read, "Since ye then are risen in Christ." The "if" is used logically, not theologically: by way of argument, and not by way of doubt. All who believe in Christ are risen with Christ. Let us meditate on this truth.

For, first, we were "dead in trespasses and sins," but having believed in Christ *we have been quickened by the Holy Ghost*, and we are dead no longer. There we lay in the tomb, ready to become corrupt; yea, some of us were corrupt, the marks of the worm of sin were upon our character, and the foul stench of actual sin arose from us. More or less according to the length of time in which we abode in that death, and according to the circumstances with which we were surrounded, death wrought in us corruption. We lay in our death quite unable to raise ourselves therefrom; ours were eyes that could not see, and ears that could not hear; a heart that could not love; and a withered hand that could not be stretched out to give the touch of faith. We were even as they that go down into the pit, as those that have been long dead: only in this we were in a worse plight than those actually dead, for we were responsible for all our omissions and inabilities. We were as guilty as if we had power, for the loss of moral power is not the loss of moral responsibility: we were, therefore, in a state of spiritual death of the most fearful kind. The Holy Spirit visited us and made us live. We remember the first sensation of life, some of us—how it seemed to tingle in our soul's veins with pain sharp and bitter; just as drowning persons when life is coming back to them suffer great pain; so did we.

Conviction was wrought in us and confession of sin, a dread of judgment to come and a sense of present condemnation; but these were tokens of life, and that life gradually deepened and opened up until the eye was opened—we could see Christ, the hand ceased to be withered, and we stretched it out and touched his garment's hem; the feet began to move in the way of obedience, and the heart felt the sweet glow of love within. Then the eyes, not content with seeing, fell to weeping; and afterwards, when the tears were wiped away, they flashed and sparkled with delight. Oh, my brethren, believers in Jesus, you are not spiritually dead any longer; on Christ you have believed, and that grand act proves that you are no more dead. You have been quickened by God according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies. Now, beloved, you are new creatures, the produce of a second birth, begotten again in Christ Jesus unto newness of life. Christ is your life; such a life as you never knew before, nor could have known apart from him. If ye then be risen with Christ ye walk in newness of life, while the world abideth in death.

Let us advance another step: we are risen with Christ, and therefore *there has been wrought in us a wonderful change.* When the dead shall rise they will not appear as they now are. The buried seed rises from the ground, but not as a seed, for it puts forth green leaf, and bud, and stem, and gradually developes expanding flower and fruit, and even so we wear a new form, for we are renewed after the image of him that created us in righteousness and holiness.

I ask you to consider the change which the Spirit of God has wrought in the believer: a wonderful change indeed! Before regeneration our soul was as our body will be when it dies; and we read that "it is sown in corruption." There was corruption in our mind and it was working irresistibly towards every evil and offensive thing. In many the corruption did not appear upon the surface, but it worked within; in others it was conspicuous and fearful to look upon. How great the change! For now the power of corruption within us is broken, the new life has overcome it, for it is a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. Corruption is upon the old nature, but it cannot touch the new, which is our true and real self. Is it not a great thing to be purged of the filthiness which would have ultimately brought us down to Tophet where the fire unquenchable burns, and the worm undying feeds upon the corrupt?

Our old state was further like that which comes upon the body at death; because it was a state of dishonour. You know how the apostle saith of the body, "It is sown in dishonour;" and certainly no corpse weareth such dishonour as that which rests upon a man who is dead in trespasses and sins. Why, of all things in the world that deserve shame and contempt, a sinful man is certainly the most so. He despises his Creator, he neglects his Saviour, he chooses evil instead of good, and puts the light from him because his deeds are evil, and therefore he prefers the darkness. In the judgment of all pure spirits a sinful man is a dishonourable man. But oh how changed is man when the grace of God works within him, for then he is honourable. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons

of God." What an honour is this! Heaven itself contains not a more honourable being than a renewed man. Well may we cry with David, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" But when we see man, in the person of Jesus, made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands, and know that Jesus hath made us kings and priests unto God, we are filled with amazement that God should so exalt us. The Lord himself has said, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." "Unto you therefore which believe he is an honour," for so the original text may run. A precious Christ makes us precious: such honour have all the saints.

When a body is buried, we are told by the apostle again that it is "sown in weakness." The poor dead frame cannot lay itself down in its last bed, friendly hands must place it there; even so we were utter weakness towards all good. When we were the captives of sin we could do nothing good, even as our Lord said, "Without me ye can do nothing." We were incapable of even a good thought apart from him. But "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"; and now we know him and the power of his resurrection. God hath given us the spirit of power and of love; is it not written, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"?

What an amazing power is this! Now we "taste of the powers of the world to come," and we are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." Faith girds us with a divine power, for "all things are possible to him that believeth," and each believer can exclaim, without boasting, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Is not this a marvellous change which the spiritual resurrection has wrought upon us? Is it not a glorious thing, that God's strength should be perfect in our weakness?

The great change mainly concerns another point. It is said of the body, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Aforetime we were natural men and discerned not the things that be of the Spirit of God. We minded earthly things and were moved by carnal lustings after the things which are seen; but now through divine grace a spirit has been created in us which feeds on spiritual bread, lives for spiritual objects, is swayed by spiritual motives and rejoices in spiritual truth. This change from the natural to the spiritual is such as only God himself could have wrought, and yet we have experienced it. To God be the glory. So that by virtue of our rising in Christ we have received life and have become the subjects of a wondrous change,—"old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In consequence of our receiving this life and undergoing this change *the things of the world and sin become a tomb to us.* To a dead man a sepulchre is as good a dwelling as he can want. You may call it his bedchamber, if you will; for he lies within it as unconscious as if he were in slumber. But the moment the dead man lives, he will not endure such a bedchamber; he calls it a dreary vault, a loathsome dungeon, an unbearable charnel, and he must leave it at once. So when you and I were natural men, and had no spiritual life, the things of this life

ented us; but it is far otherwise now. A merely outward religion
ll that we desired; a dead form suited a dead soul. Judaism pleased
who were under its yoke, in the very beginning of the gospel; new
ns and holy days and traditional ordinances, and fasting and feasting
great things with those who forgot their resurrection with Christ.
hose things make pretty furniture for a dead man's chamber; but
the eternal life enters the soul these outward ordinances are flung
he living man rends off his grave clothes, tears away his cerements,
demands such garments as are suitable for life. So the apostle in
hapter before our text tells us to let no man spoil us by the
tions of men and the inventions of a dead ritualism, for these things
ot the portion of renewed and spiritual men.

, too, all merely carnal objects become as a grave to us, whether
be sinful pleasures or selfish gains. For the dead man the shroud,
offin, and the vault are suitable enough; but make the corpse alive
, and he cannot rest in the coffin; he makes desperate struggles to
it up. See how by main force he dashes up the lid, rends off his
ages, and leaps from the bier. So the man renewed by grace cannot
sin, it is a coffin to him: he cannot bear evil pleasures, they are
hroud; he cries for liberty. When resurrection comes the man
s the hillock above his grave, and scatters monument and head-stone,
se are raised above him. Some souls are buried under a mass of
ighteousness, like wealthy men on whom shrines of marble have
heaped; but all these the believer shakes off, he must have them
, he cannot bear these dead works. He cannot live otherwise than
ith; all other life is death to him. He must get out of his former
; for as a tomb is not a fit place for a living man, so when we are
ened by grace the things of sin, and self, and carnal sense become
y catacombs to us, wherein our soul feels buried, and out of which
ust arise. How can we that are raised out of the death of sin live
nger therein?

d, now, beloved, *we are at this time wholly raised from the dead* in
itual sense. Let us think of this, for our Lord did not have his
quickened while his feet remained in the sepulchre; but he rose a
t and entire man, alive throughout. Even so have we been re-
l in every part. We have received, though it be but in its infancy,
ect spiritual life: we are perfect in Christ Jesus. In our inner
ur eye is opened, our ear is awakened, our hand is active, our foot
nble: our every faculty is there, though as yet immature, and
g development, and having the old dead nature to contend with.

reover, and best of all, we are so raised that *we shall die no more.*
ll me no more the dreary tale that a man who has received the
life may yet lose grace and perish. With our Bibles in our hands
ow better. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death
o more dominion over him," and therefore he that hath received
's life in him shall never die. Hath he not said, "He that be-
in me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever
and believeth in me shall never die"? This life which he has
us shall be in us "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting
He has himself said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they
never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." On

the day of our quickening we bid farewell to spiritual death, and to the sepulchre wherein we slept under sin's dominion. Farewell, thou deadly love of sin; we have done with thee! Farewell, dead world, corrupt world; we have done with thee! Christ has raised us. Christ has given us eternal life. We forsake for ever the dreary abodes of death, and seek the heavenly places. Our Jesus lives, and because he lives we shall live also, world without end.

Thus I have tried to work out the metaphor of resurrection, by which our spiritual renewal is so well set forth.

II. We are urged by the apostle to use the life which we have received, and so, secondly, LET US EXERCISE THE NEW LIFE IN SUITABLE PURSUITS. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Let your actions be agreeable to your new life.

First, then, *let us leave the sepulchre.* If we are quickened, our first act should be to leave the region of death. Let us quit the vault of a merely outward religion, and let us worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us have done with priestcraft, and all the black business of spiritual undertaking, and let the dead bury their dead; we will have none of it. Let us have done with outward forms, and rites, and ceremonies, which are not of Christ's ordaining, and let us know nothing save Christ crucified; for that which is not of the living Lord is a mere piece of funeral pomp, fit for the cemeteries of formalists, whose whole religion is a shovelling in of dust on coffin-lids. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Let us also quit the vault of carnal enjoyments, wherein men seek to satisfy themselves with provision for the flesh. Let us not live by the sight of the eye, nor by the hearing of the ear. Let us not live for the amassing of wealth, or the gaining of fame, for these ought to be as dead things to the man who is risen in Christ. Let us not live for the world which we see, nor after the fashion of men to whom this life is everything. Let us live as those that have come out of the world, and who, though they are in it, are no more of it. Let us be unmindful of the country from whence we came out, and leave it, as Abraham did, as though there were no such country, henceforth dwelling with our God, sojourners with him, seeking "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." As Jesus Christ left behind him all the abodes of death, let us do the same.

And, then, let us *hasten to forget every evil, even as our Lord hastened to leave the tomb.* How little a time, after all, did he sojourn among the dead. He must needs lie in the heart of the earth three days, but he made them as short as possible, so that it is difficult to make out the three days at all. They were there, for there were fragments of each period, but surely never were three days so short as Jesus made them. He cut them short in righteousness, and being loosed from the pains of death, he rose early, at the very break of day. At the first instant that it was possible for him to get away from the sepulchre consistently with the Scriptures he left the napkin and the grave-clothes, and stood in the garden, waiting to salute his disciples. So let it be with us: there should be no lingering, no loitering, no hankering after the world, no clinging to its vanities, no making provision for the flesh. Up in the morning early, oh ye who are spiritually quickened! Up in the morning early, from your ease, your

carnal pleasure, your love of wealth and self, and away out from the dark vault into a congenial sphere of action: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

To pursue the analogy: when our Lord had left the tomb thus early he spent a season on earth among his disciples, *and we are to pass the time of our sojourning here on earth, as his was passed, in holy service.* Our Lord reckoned that he was on the move from earth as soon as he rose. If you remember, he said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." He did not say, "I shall ascend," as though he looked at it as a future thing; but he said, "I ascend," as if it were so quickly to be done that it was already doing. Forty days he stayed, for he had forty days' work to do; but he looked upon himself as already going up into heaven. He had done with the world, he had done with the grave, and now he said, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father." We also have our forty days to tarry here; the period may be longer or shorter as the providence of God ordains, but it will soon be over, and the time of our departure will come. Let us spend our risen life on earth as Jesus spent his,—in a greater seclusion from the world and in greater nearness to heaven than ever. Our Lord occupied himself much in testimony, manifesting himself, as we have already seen, in divers ways, to his friends and followers. Let us also manifest the fruits of our risen life, and bear testimony to the power of God. Let all men see that you are risen. So live that there can be no more doubt about your spiritual resurrection than there was about Christ's literal resurrection. Do not publish to the world your own virtues that you may be honoured among them; yet "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Put your possession of the new life beyond question, so that when you have gone home your friends and acquaintances may say—"He was a living child of God, for we felt the power of his life; he was a changed man, for we saw the renewing." Jesus spent his risen life also in comforting his saints. He said, "Peace be unto you." He spoke to one and another —to the Maries, to poor Peter who denied him, and to all the assembled company, cheering them and preparing them for their future career. He spent those forty days in setting everthing in order in his kingdom, arranging as to what should be when he should be taken up, and leaving his last commission to his followers that they should "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Beloved, let us also spend the time of our sojourning here in the fear of God, worshipping him, serving him, glorifying him, endeavouring to set everything in order for the extension of our Master's kingdom, for the comforting of his saints, for the accomplishment of his sacred purposes.

But now I have led you up so far, I want to go further and rise higher. May the Lord help us. *Let our minds ascend to heaven in Christ.* Even while our bodies are here we are to be drawn upward with Christ; attracted to him, so that we can say, "He hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Our text saith, "Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"; what is this but rising to heavenly pursuits? Jesus has gone up; let us go up with him. As to these bodies, we cannot as yet ascend, for they are not fit to inherit the kingdom of God;

et let our thoughts and hearts mount up and build a happy rest on igh. Let not a stray thought alone ascend like one lone bird which ings and mounts the sky; but let our whole mind, soul, spirit, heart, rise as when doves fly as a cloud. Let us be practical, too, and in ery deed seek the things that are above: seek them because we feel re need them; seek them because we greatly prize them; seek them ecause we hope to gain them; for a man will not heartily seek for that hich he hath no hope of obtaining. The things which are above which re are even now to seek are such as these; let us seek heavenly communion, for we are no more numbered with the congregation of the dead, ut we have fellowship in Christ's resurrection, and with all the risen nes. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus hrist," and "our conversation is in heaven." Let us seek to walk with he living God, and to know the fellowship of the Spirit.

Let us seek heavenly graces; for "every good gift and every perfect ift is from above." Let us seek more faith, more love, more patience, nore zeal: let us labour after greater charity, greater brotherly kindness, reater humbleness of spirit. Let us labour after likeness to Christ, hat he may be the firstborn among many brethren. Seek to bear the nage of the heavenly, and to wear those jewels which adorn heavenly pirits.

Seek also heavenly objects. Aim at the glory of God in everything. 'ou have to labour and toil in this world, for you are yet in the body; ake care to use worldly things to God's glory. Exercise your privileges nd fulfil your duties as men, and as Englishmen, as before God, not inding the judgment of men. Wherein you mingle with the sons of nen, take heed that you descend not to their level, nor act from their notives. You are not to seek your own selfish ends, or the aggrandizement of a party, but to promote the general good, and the interests of ruth, righteousness, peace, and purity. Sanctify everything by the love f God and your neighbour. Seek no party ends, but things which are ure, and honest, and of good report. Descend not to the falsehood, the rickery, the policy which are from beneath; but honestly, sincerely, ighteously, ever seek to live as those who are alive from the dead.

"Seek those things which are above," that is, heavenly joys. Oh eek to know on earth the peace of heaven, the rest of heaven, the ictory of heaven, the service of heaven, the communion of heaven, the oliness of heaven: you may have foretastes of all these; seek after hem. Seek, in a word, to be preparing for the heaven which Christ is reparing for you. You are soon to dwell above; robe yourselves for the reat festival. Your treasure is above, let your hearts be with it. All that ou are to possess in eternity is above, where Christ is; rise, then, and njoy it. Let hope anticipate the joys which are reserved, and so let us egin our heaven here below. If ye then be risen with Christ, live ccording to your risen nature, for your life is hid with Christ in God.

What a magnet to draw us towards heaven should this fact be, -that Christ sitteth at God's right hand. Where should the wife's noughts be when her husband is away but with the absent and beloved ne? You know, brethren, it is not otherwise with us: the objects of ur affection are always followed by our thoughts. Let Jesus, then, be s a great loadstone, drawing our meditations and affections towards

himself. He is *sitting*, for his work is done; as it is written, "This man, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God." Let us rise and rest with him. He is sitting on a throne. Observe his majesty, delight in his power, and trust in his dominion. He is sitting at the right hand of God in the place of honour and favour. This is a proof that we are beloved and favoured of God, for our representative has the choicest place, at God's right hand. Let your hearts ascend and enjoy that love and favour with him. Take wing, my thoughts, and fly away to Jesus. My soul, hast thou not often said, "Woe's me that I dwell in Meshech, and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar: oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest"? Now, then, my soul, here are wings for thee. Jesus draws thee upward. Thou hast a right to be where Jesus is, for thou art married to him; therefore let thy thoughts abide with him, rest in him, delight in him, rejoice in him, and yet again rejoice. The sacred ladder is before us; let us climb it until by faith we sit in the heavenlies with him.

May the Spirit of God bless these words to you.

III. Thirdly, inasmuch as we are risen with Christ, LET THE NEW LIFE DELIGHT ITSELF IN SUITABLE OBJECTS. This brings in the second verse: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." "Set your affection." These words do not quite express the meaning, though they are as near it as any one clause could well come. We might render it thus: "Have a relish for things above"; or, "study industriously things above"; or, "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." That which is proper enough for a dead man is quite unsuitable for a risen one. Objects of desire which might suit us when we were sinners are not legitimate nor worthy objects for us when we are made saints. As we are quickened we must exercise life, and as we have ascended we must love higher things than those of earth.

What are these "things above" which we should set our affection upon? I ask you now to lift your eyes above yon clouds and this lower firmament to the residence of God. What see you there? First, there is *God himself*. Make him the subject of your thoughts, your desires, your emotions, your love. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thine heart." "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Call him "God my exceeding joy." Let nothing come between you and your heavenly Father. What is all the world if you have not God, and when you once have God, what matters it though all the world be gone? God is all things, and when thou canst say "God is mine," thou art richer than Crœsus. O to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." O to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength: that is what the law required, it is what the gospel enables us to render.

What see I next? I see *Jesus*, who is God, but yet is truly man. Need I press upon you, beloved, to set your love upon the Well-beloved? Has he not won your heart, and doth he not hold it now as under a mighty spell? I know you love him. Fix your mind on him then. Often meditate upon his divine person, his perfect work, his mediatorial glory, his second coming, his glorious reign, his love for

you, your own security in him, your union with him. Oh let these sweet thoughts possess your breasts, fill your mouths, and influence your lives. Let the morning break with thoughts of Christ, and let your last thought at night be sweetened with his presence. Set your affection upon him who has set his affection upon you.

But what next do I see above? I see *the new Jerusalem*, which is the mother of us all. I see the church of Christ triumphant in heaven, with which the church militant is one. We do not often enough realize the fact that we are come unto the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. Love all the saints, but do not forget the saints above. Have fellowship with them, for we make but one communion. Remember those:—

> "Who once were mourning here below,
> And wet their couch with tears,
> Who wrestled hard, as we do now,
> With sins, and doubts, and fears."

Speak with the braves who have won their crowns, the heroes who have fought a good fight, and now rest from their labours, waving the palm. Let your hearts be often among the perfected, with whom you are to spend eternity.

And what else is there above that our hearts should love but *heaven itself?* It is the place of holiness; let us so love it that we begin to be holy here. It is the place of rest; let us so delight in it that by faith we enter into that rest. O my brethren, you have vast estates which you have never seen; and methinks if I had an estate on earth which was soon to be mine I should wish to take a peep over the hedge now and then. If I could not take possession, I should like to see what I had in reversion. I would make an excuse to pass that way and say to any who were with me, "That estate is going to be mine before long." In your present poverty console yourselves with the many mansions. In your sickness delight much in the land where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick." In the midst of depression of spirit comfort your heart with the prospect of unmixed felicity.

> "No more fatigue, no more distress,
> Nor sin nor death shall reach the place;
> No groans to mingle with the songs
> Which warble from immortal tongues."

What! Are you fettered to earth? Can you not project yourself into the future? The stream of death is narrow; cannot your imagination and your faith leap over the brook to stand on the hither shore awhile and cry, "All is mine, and mine for ever. Where Jesus is there shall I be; where Jesus sits there shall I rest;

> 'Far from a world of grief and sin,
> With God eternally shut in'"?

"Set your affection on things above." Oh to get away at this present time from these dull cares which like a fog envelope us! Even we that are Christ's servants, and live in his court, at times feel weary, and droop as if his service were hard. He never means it to be a bondage,

and it is our fault if we make it so. Martha's service is due, but she is not called to be *cumbered* with much serving; that is her own arrangement: let us serve abundantly, and yet sit with Mary at the Master's feet. You who are in business, and mix with the world by the necessity of your callings, must find it difficult to keep quite clear of the down-dragging influences of this poor world; it will hamper you if it can. You are like a bird, which is always in danger when it alights on the earth. There are lime-twigs, and traps, and nets, and guns, and a poor bird is never safe except upon the wing and up aloft. Yet birds must come down to feed, and they do well to gather their meal in haste, and take to their wings again. When we come down among men we must speedily be up again. When you have to mix with the world, and see its sin and evil, yet take heed that you do not light on the ground without your Father: and then, as soon as ever you have picked up your barley, rise again, away, away, for this is not your rest. You are like Noah's dove flying over the waste of waters, there is no rest for the sole of your feet but on the ark with Jesus. On this resurrection-day fence out the world, let us chase away the wild boar of the wood, and let the vines bloom, and the tender grapes give forth their good smell, and let the Beloved come and walk in the garden of our souls, while we delight ourselves in him and in his heavenly gifts. Let us not carry our burden of things below on this holy day, but let us keep it as a Sabbath unto the Lord. On the Sabbath we are no more to work with our minds than with our hands. Cares and anxieties of an earthly kind defile the day of sacred rest. The essence of Sabbath-breaking lies in worry, and murmuring, and unbelief, with which too many are filled. Put these away, beloved, for we are risen with Christ, and it is not meet that we should wander among the tombs. Nay, rather let us sing unto the Lord a new song, and praise him with our whole soul.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Colossians ii. 8—23; iii. 1—15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—306, 319, 873.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ON WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me."—Exodus xxxii. 26.

DURING the last few days in which the stir of a general election has moved the most quiet of our streets, everyone of you must have been asked many times on which side you are. Some are enthusiastic on this side, and some are quite as warm on the other, and the interest of all ranks and classes is aroused. Now that the Lord's-day has come I hope you will forget all about politics and listen to me while I ask a far more important question, namely, "*Who is on the Lord's side?*" May God grant us grace to give an honest answer, and may that answer be, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." May thousands of you say to the Lord what Amasai and his band said to David, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse."

Before I enlarge upon this exceedingly personal and practical question, I must ask you to remember the man who asked it. It was Moses who put this question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and he put it to Israel when sin was rampant in the camp. It is well to remember that he stood there as a lone man, the solitary champion of Jehovah, and challenged the whole nation to decide for God. His own brother had practically deserted him, and become the means of making the golden calf; the seventy elders who ought to have been by his side were none of them present with him; except his lieutenant Joshua, he stood alone in the midst of the multitude just when they were intoxicated with their lustful pleasures and their fanatical worship. He was equal to the emergency. Thoughtless altogether of his own safety, dauntless, brave, and bold, he dashes down their idol, and commands it to be ground small and cast into the water of which the nation would drink. He upbraids them to their faces, and strides among them, as much superior to them all as a shepherd is superior to the flock he tends. You admire his courage, you wonder at his supreme power, and you enquire for the secret of such sovereign strength. Moses must have worn about him a dignity most commanding, a royalty far superior to that which comes of birth

or office. Know you not whence he derived that majesty? He had been for forty days alone with God. Heavenly communion makes a man strong. He had been in the secret place of the Most High: he had spoken with God face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend, and it was not likely that he should fear the face of man after having seen the face of God. He had been familiar with the sublime, and when he came down to the infinite littleness of men, who had dared to liken the glory of God to the image of an ox that eateth grass, he wore about him a natural superiority, before which they all trembled and slunk away in fear.

Moses was also a man of prayer. He had stayed the hand of the Almighty on the mountain's brow till even God himself had said, "Let me alone": wondrous though it may seem, the man Moses, by his holy faith, had even put a restraint on God himself. Be ye sure of this, that the man who hath power with God will have power with men. If we have power with God for men, we shall have power with men for God. He that can overcome heaven by prayer, what is there that he cannot conquer?

There stood Moses, like a lone rock in the midst of the tempestuous sea. The tumult of the people raged around him, but he was firm and unmoved. He became indeed the one fixed point upon which the very existence of true religion depended. All the partisans of godliness remaining in the camp, hidden and concealed, rallied to his call, and the one man saved the cause. So has it been in history, not once nor twice, but many a time. A single determined man, full of God's Spirit, has confronted the whole mass of the people, has breasted the rushing torrent of popular prejudice, and has not only stemmed the current, but turned it in the opposite direction, even as Moses did. Being girt with the power of God, and having learned to dwell on high, the one believer has become the heroic leader of a band of earnest hearts. Brethren and sisters, we want in these days men and women of fixed principles; we need individuals of enlightened mind and determined will. Those who know what is right, and will not deviate from it, even though they should hazard their lives, are greatly required nowadays. We want to have, not one nor two, but multitudes of steadfast men, who, when they put their foot down, mean to abide there, and cannot be pushed from off their standing-place. If any of you aspire to lead your own families, and to influence your own connections in the right way, you must possess personal strength of mind, of the right sort, and you must get it where Moses gained his power, you must be much alone with God, and mighty on your knees. Come forth to face the wicked world with your faces radiant with the light of God. Communion with heaven must win for you divine help, that you may not be overcome of evil, but may overcome evil with good.

Thus much concerning Moses. God make us to be like him. Let us now consider Moses's question and command: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." I think I see here three very important points. The first is *decision*—a man must be on the Lord's side. Secondly, here is *avowal*, "Let him come unto me:" if he be on the Lord's side, do not let him skulk away in his tent, but let him confront the adversary. And, thirdly, here is *consecration*, for those on the Lord's side were to come to Moses, that they might do the Lord's bidding, and fight the Lord's battles at all hazards.

I. First then, here is DECISION, or being on the Lord's side. *It is a decision upon the most sublime and important theme* which can ever come under a man's notice. Here are the two camps, God and Satan, truth and falsehood, holiness and sin. On which side are we ranged? When I see a man pausing as it were between the two hosts, and saying to himself, "Which shall have my heart? Which shall command my service?" I feel that he tarries in a position at once hazardous and sublime, for whichever that choice shall be it means eternity; it means heaven and all its glories, or it means hell with all its terrors. Whether the man shall be for God or for his enemies, will mean for that man kinship with angels, or league with devils. It shall mean for him the white robe and the everlasting song of adoring praise, or it shall mean the blackness of darkness and the perpetual wailing of unending misery. Hence a man is placed in a most solemn position when this question is put to him, "Art thou on God's side, or art thou his enemy?" About all other matters you should go to work with such a measure of consideration as they deserve, but to this business you must bring your weightiest thought: you must concentrate all your wit and wisdom, and judge and decide upon this matter with all calmness and deliberation, but with all solemnity of resolution, and sternness of determination, so that having once made your choice by the directing grace of God you may stand to that choice world without end. Are there any here who have not decided upon this point? As the question goes round, "Who is on the Lord's side?" are some of you obliged to say, "I have not made up my mind yet"? It is time you did, for it is a dreadful thing for a man to be standing there, as I said, midway between God and the devil, between Christ and Belial, between heaven and hell, for, whether he knows it or not, that midway place which he thinks he occupies is really on the wrong side. So our Lord Jesus judges it:—"He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

This decision, dear friends, so important and weighty, *should be made as early as possible.* It is not a matter which we can afford to leave in the balances, hanging in suspense. Oh that young people would think of this, and not waste the best part of their lives in halting between two opinions! When Agesilaus came to the borders of Macedon he sent the laconic message—"As friends or as enemies?" The answer was, "We must stop awhile, and take advice." His reply was, "While you advise, we march." Happy is that young man who can say to others, "While you are considering, I have decided: while you are hesitating, I have pushed on and given my heart to God: while you are temporising, I have already entered into conflict with sin, and death, and hell; while you are counting the cost, I have already reckoned the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." Happy he who first crosses the Rubicon of decision, drawing his sword against sin and throwing away the scabbard, that he may never make truce or treaty with the foe. It is a decision that should be made at once, O man, for death is near thee, and eternity begins to dawn. Wait not, young man. Wait not, young woman. Every hour renders it more likely that you will make a foolish choice. Delay is dangerous, for it is breeding in you the disease of trifling. Take heed lest you grow into a procrastinator, and halt, and halt, and halt till you become such a

cripple that you will halt through life, and never march with the armies of the Lord. Oh that grace would lead each one to decide upon the spot!

This is a decision of the greatest importance, for *it will influence every subsequent decision throughout life.* If God's grace shall lead me to say, "Yes, write my name down in the roll of champions on the Lord's side," then from that day forth every other question will be read in the light of that decision. You will henceforth give your love to truth in rags, and not to falsehood in silk apparel: henceforth you will favour righteousness when she walks in the mire, and abhor injustice when it rides in the high places of the earth. If you are on God's side whatsoever things are pure, honest, and of good report will find a friend in you. You will never be on the side of drunkenness, nor on the side of oppression, injustice, or war; for in being on the side of God you are the advocate of sobriety, justice, and peace. The side of God is in the highest and best sense the side of mankind. We best promote the interests of nations when we advance the cause of God. I pray that our piety may be of such a practical kind that we may carry it with us into everything that we do. I like not that religion which lives in churches and is glorious on a Sunday, like the beadle in his fine coat, but falls back into its ordinary shabby wear when the service is done. Give me that godliness which finds itself at home at the fireside, and is in its right place in the counting-house and the work-room. True religion is meant for field and street, for polling-booth and market: it gives a tincture to everything with which the man comes in contact, and, find him where you will, you see that he is on the Lord's side, because he is on the right side. The follower of Jesus takes that side which for a season may be unpopular, but which is, according to the law and to the testimony, right in the sight of God. Take care, then, how you make your decision as to God, since on that pivot your whole character will turn.

As to this decision *there ought to be no possible difficulty.* A man should decide for God since he is his Creator. Dare you think of being opposed to him that made you, and who can crush you as easily as a moth? He is our Redeemer, the Lord that bought us with his blood; is it possible that we can be on any other side than his? He is our daily Preserver, in whose hand our breath is, and can we live in antagonism to him? Our relation to our God ought to be an easy question to decide when we recollect our obligations. We are not only indebted to God for our being, but for every favour which we now enjoy or ever hope to possess. Should not a man be on the side of his friend, on the side of the best of friends? Think of our responsibilities as they arise out of all the blessings which God bestows, and there should be an instant verdict of the heart for God and for his Christ. It should not be difficult to any right-minded man to say, "Yes, I am on the side of truth;" and because God is truth, we should be on his side. Every right principle demands that we yield ourselves to God. His is the just side, the true side, the side which must ultimately conquer, the side deliberately adopted and earnestly upheld by all holy angels and perfected spirits. Should our decision need much considering?

Who wants time to debate when the way is plain? And yet *it is sadly true that, through our sinfulness, an honest, sincere, practical decision is not soon arrived at.* No, it never will be arrived at except the

Holy Spirit shall influence our minds and deliver us from the thraldom of our sinful lusts. Oh, that the Spirit of God might lead us to choose God's side although it is not the side of self, but directly the opposite. The most of men are swayed by their own interests,—"Which is the best side *for me?* Which will bring me the most pelf, or the most esteem, or the most quiet?" But he that is on the side of God scorns such mean considerations, and favours, not that which is profitable for the present, but that which is just and right.

Alas, many are influenced by the fear of men. What a potent factor is this evil element in directing human affairs! Men would do right, but they dare not; they would avoid that which is wrong, but then they might be ridiculed for too great precision, and therefore they indulge the sin which their conscience condemns. My brethren and sisters, may the Lord give us a different mind from this. May the opinion of men have small weight with us. Let us not be afraid to make enemies rather than disobey God. I would have you of the same mind as the old Spartan who said the question with him never was "How many are my enemies? but, where are they?" Yes, that is it, "Where are they?" That is all. We are ready for them, and do not count the odds. If adversaries to truth and righteousness abound, never think of them; do not calculate their strength, nor estimate what an attack upon them may cost you, but at once throw down the gage of battle, and for God and for righteousness take you the right side.

One other remark must be made: *this decision involves but one alternative.* If we are not on God's side we are on the opposite side. All through the word of God there is no preparation made for a third party. There is a very numerous body of people who try to inhabit the Betweenities. They will, if they can, go on both sides, or on neither side; they want to be let alone: they wish to keep themselves to themselves, and say nothing and do nothing either way. Now, there is no preparation made for you either in this world or in the next: there is no synagogue of the undecided on earth, and no purgatory of middle men in the unseen world. As to this world, there is no comfort held out to you; you are not praised, but you are denounced by the Scriptures, and even cursed most bitterly, for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty. You are regarded as enemies to God until you are his friends; and it must be so, for he that is not honest is dishonest, he that is not chaste is impure, and he that is not for God is necessarily against him. It is a matter about which a soul cannot be colourless: so far from this being possible, this matter is one about which there is usually much intensity of feeling one way or another; for God hath fervent friends and bitter foes. All great questions raise in men's minds strong movements one way or the other, and this greatest of questions is sure to do so. Though at present, my friend, you feel no strong movement in the wrong direction, yet that which can produce a great evil movement is lurking in your spirit; and if it be not slain by the grace of God leading you to be on God's side, one of these days that slumbering sin of yours may rouse itself to an awful display of power. As when a viper, which aforetime was numbed by the cold is warmed into vitality, stings all who are near it, so does sin when its hour cometh. As the lion cub which has not tasted blood is tame as a cat, and yet by-and-by it assumes

all the fury of the beast of prey, so is it with the demon of iniquity which hides within the human spirit. One way or another you must have God and his Christ, or you must be the servants of Satan: holiness must hold you or sin will bind you; heaven must win you, and attract you to itself, or hell will mark you for its own, and downward you will descend. There, then, I leave the matter of decision, praying earnestly that all who have decided may stand to it, and that those who have not decided may be led of the Spirit to make up their minds at once.

II. Secondly, let us consider the AVOWAL. "Who is on the Lord's side? *Let him come unto me.*" The Hebrew is more sharp. It reads like this: "Who is on Jehovah's side? To me." It is like the cry of one who strikes the first blow in war, and unfurling the standard summons men to enlist. "For God—to me." "If you really are his servants, come and gather to me." In this avowal there is, first of all, *a coming out.* They were to come out from amongst the idolaters. You who are on the Lord's side, away in your tents, whither you have gone that you might not join with the riotous crowd—come to me! You that are away there in the furtherest limits of the camp, who have gone to be quiet from all this noise and uproar—come into the gate of the camp to me, and show yourselves. None must hide their colours this day. Now then, I say this morning to you who are on God's side, do not conceal your religion; be not wickedly reticent; be not ungratefully retiring, but come forward. "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing." There is too little separation from the world nowadays among Christian professors. I do not wonder at the question a little girl asked of her mother when she had been reading the New Testament, "Mother, don't you think it would be very nice if we could all move away, and go and live where there are Christians?" Her mother said, "Why, there are many Christians around us." "Oh no, mother, not like those I have been reading of in the New Testament." I am afraid the child was right, though there are some New Testament Christians even here. I wish there were many more who in all things followed not the fashions of the world and the follies of the times, but walked with God in the separated path where Jesus' footsteps are seen.

This avowal, however, was not a mere coming out only: they were to *come to the leader.* Moses stood there and said, "Let him come *unto me.*" He stood there as God's representative, and seemed to say, "I am on God's side; there is no question about that, though I stand alone: now let others who are on God's side come to me." "Ah!" you say this morning, "We wish we had a leader bold and brave to whom we could come." I reply, you have such a leader. Where is he? He is gone into the highest heavens, but your faith may see him. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is first and foremost on God's side: he proved it by his life, and proved it by his death, and this morning he bids all that are on God's side to come to him. Come and let him be your Master and Lord; come and imitate his example, and keep his precepts; come and proclaim his gospel and defend his kingdom. He that is on the Lord's side let him come to Christ, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

And yet there is this much more about it. Those who were to come to Moses were of course to *come to one another.* When Moses said, "Who

is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me," he was virtually gathering a church, and enlisting an army of men whose hearts God had touched. Such came forth at Moses' call. Come, then, ye that love the Lord, come and join with others who think as you do. Do not birds of a feather flock together? If God has made you birds of Paradise, hasten to fly like doves to your windows. Friend, if I am on the Lord's side, and thou art on the Lord's side, why should we be strangers to one another? There are few enough to stand up for Christ, surely they ought to be knit together in closest affection. Unity is strength, and as we have no strength to spare, let us be united. Come forth you that know the Lord, and avow your allegiance by joining with others who love your King: enlist under the same Captain, and inscribe your names in the same muster-roll.

I cannot give out this call with all the energy I would, or I would publish it from every market-cross. I do beseech those who are *not* on the Lord's side not to attempt to unite with any visible church, for that would be rank hypocrisy; but I would encourage and invite, and entreat, and almost go the length of commanding those who are on the Lord's side to declare themselves. Come you to us, for we also are on the Lord's side; lend us your help; afford us your company; let us enter into fellowship with one another, and let us be men banded together for everything that is good and true, because we are on the Lord's side. Attend to this, I pray you, and make an avowal of your decision for God as speedily as possible.

III. In the third place, with this avowal should come CONSECRATION. Those who are on the Lord's side should not merely give their names, but give themselves. When we are on the side of Christ, we belong to Christ. Every man who really is on the Lord's side should feel that he is *bound to obey God's will.* I thank God that I learned this lesson when first I knew the Saviour. I did not think that in matters of religion I was to follow my father, or any other good man. It seemed to me that God had put into my hand the Bible, and I was to read it, I was to find out with diligent searching whatever the Lord taught me in that book, and I was to believe and to do as his word taught me. I feel it now to be a great comfort to my heart that I took nothing at second-hand. I received my doctrine not of men, neither was I taught it, but I went directly to the well-head, and drank from the source itself, by the teaching of the Spirit of God. I want you all to do this. Do not follow a church; do not follow any great preacher: pin yourself to no man's sleeve. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them. If everybody would do this there might still remain diversities of judgment, but I am inclined to think that unity in doctrine, and in practice, would be far sooner attained by this habit than by any other means. If each one would go to the Word for himself, and no longer settle down in an "ism" learned from somebody else, we should know the truth and come together in our views of it. Following in a certain track because you happen to be put in it by the circumstances of your birth and education is not the way of a candid and enlightened mind. I care not for the decrees of churches, or the dogmas of men. I honour both churches and holy men, but not as dictators to our faith. This one book, the Bible,

contains the religion of the true Christian, so far as it can be described by letters; and the Spirit of God is promised to enlighten us as to its meaning. God grant we may never say, "I do so-and-so because it is in the Prayer Book"; or, "Because it is according to our denominational standards." What have you to do with any book but the Bible, or with any denomination but the church of Christ, unless it be that the book and the denomination are scriptural? See you well to this, for careful obedience to God is much needed in these times. I have referred to a Spartan once or twice this morning, for something of the Spartan spirit would do well if saturated with the spirit of Christ. A Spartan in the midst of battle was about to kill his foe; his sword was uplifted as the trumpet sounded a retreat, and he drew back his weapon; and when one said, "Why did you allow him to escape?" he replied, "I would sooner obey my general than kill an enemy." For a Christian there is nothing like obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams." Let us learn that.

When we come to be on the Lord's side we are not only to be willing to obey his will, but *we are to serve him actively and energetically.* Moses said to these men, "Gird every man his sword upon his thigh." You are not to enlist on the Lord's side to idle away your time. Hosts of people think when they get into the bosom of the church that they are to sleep there like babes in their mothers' arms. The gospel coach goes by, and they climb to a box seat if they can, and ride; but the idea of ever drawing the coach, the idea of working for the Master, enters not into their heads. It must not be so with us. We must throw our activities and our energies into the side which is God's, even as the tribe of Levi fought valorously against the rebellious people.

And we must do this at all hazards and costs. These men had a very painful duty to perform. They were made executioners of their brethren, who were found guilty of high treason against God their King. It cost their hearts much to kill every man his brother or friend, but if they found them obdurate in their idolatry they were commanded to slay them without mercy, and they did so. Their hand did not spare, neither did their eye have pity upon any who persisted in rebellion. See what Moses said of them—"Of Levi he said, let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." They were thorough with God, and so must we be. When you join Christ's church there must be a cutting off of right arms and a plucking out of right eyes if necessary; there must be a mortifying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We are called to a battle, and we must prepare for it, and not be afraid.

Now, because these men were thus faithful to God they were made the teachers of Israel ever afterwards. Let me continue to read to you what Moses says of them, in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 10, because they had impartially executed the sentence of the Lord. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thy altar." Furthermore, they were to be preserved and made more than conquerors because of their stern faithfulness.

They had smitten through the loins of God's enemies, and now the prayer of the man of God breathes this blessing over them—"Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." Levi smote God's enemies, God will smite his enemies. Those who mind God's work shall find that God works for them. They did their duty with stern integrity, and therefore God makes them leaders of his people, teachers of his nation, and they shall henceforth themselves triumph over all their adversaries. I would have every man who is on the Lord's side, and who has avowed it, follow the Lord's word in all things, cost what it may. You will find in the Bible doctrines which the world will denounce as harsh: hold them, and let them call you cruel if they please. You will have to publish stern doctrines which will smite the tall crest of human pride, and thwart the pleasing inclinations of fleshly minds; publish them nevertheless. God will justify you in so doing, and vindicate you from all aspersions. Allow no reservations. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. If you are "a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb," it is yours to do what God bids you. Yours not to reason why, yours if necessary to dare and die, and still in all holy meekness and gentleness to maintain truth, rough and rugged though it seem to the dainty philosophers of our day. Be ever on the side of right. May the Spirit of God help us in all this, for unless he help us, I am sure we shall fail; but if he be with us we shall conquer. Those of you who are as yet little in Israel should take care that you do well your work for God in your obscure places, and then you shall be lifted to more prominent positions. These Levites were made teachers because they had dared at God's bidding to be executioners, a work associated in men's minds with dishonour. They were bold enough, though but a few, to confront the whole camp, and now they shall be made wise enough to teach all the tribes. Use well the lowest position and do it honour. Agesilaus the Spartan, when they placed him in a back seat, took no umbrage at it, but said, "I will honour the seat if the seat does not honour me." So, if you are placed in the lowliest place in Christ's house, do honour to it, and by-and-by, when the king comes in to see the guests he will say, "Friend, come up higher." If you are faithful over a few things, he will make you ruler over many things, only take heed to it that you fully consecrate yourselves to him on whose side you are.

I wish in conclusion to show the suitability of my subject to this present time. I am sure it is not out of season. "Who is on the Lord's side?" let him come to Christ and consecrate himself this day to him. For first, *the worship of the golden calf is pretty general now.* Men are esteemed according to the amount of money which they possess; indeed, we say a man is "worth so much." Though the man may not be worth a pair of old shoes, yet if he has a big house, a fair estate, and a huge capital, he is said to be worth so much. Poor little creature! In many cases his worth might be written on your thumbnail. It is not the man that has worth: his house, his lands, and his gold have the worth, but not the man. There is far too much bowing down and cringing before the golden calf in all classes of society. No end of dodges are tried

to get a scraping of one of the creature's hoofs. Brother, you must sooner endure poverty than do a wrong thing for the sake of riches; and you must learn to value men for what they are, not for what they have. It needs not Christianity to tell you that some of the worthiest, noblest, and most kingly of men earn their bread by the sweat of their brow: when you meet them, love and honour them. On the other hand, you must know that some of the vilest of men have at times climbed to high places of wealth and power. Do not cringe to any man, but least of all bow to a mere money-bag. Value men by their characters, and not by their positions. God grant that none of us may ever be found worshipping the golden calf. Yet to get into *society* the meanest things are done. I do not know what sort of thing *society* may be, but I have heard that it is a very wonderful achievement to get into society; to have the privilege of enjoying the empty ceremonies and hollow shams of stupid splendour! To have the privilege of talking to those persons who spend more on their dress than on their religion. From what little I do know of this wonderful thing called "society," I have felt no ambition to partake in its felicities; and yet to get into society I have seen men fling away their principles, forsake their friends, stifle their consciences, abandon their church fellowship, and become traitors to their God. Forsooth, they are successful in business, and hope to rank among the county families, and so they leave those who love them to entertain at lavish cost those who sneer at them. The Lord save those of you who are prosperous from being thus degraded.

The next thing you need to be firm and strong about is *the superstitions which are too often associated with religious worship.* Remember, God is to be worshipped, and God only. That is the essence of the first commandment: but God is to be worshipped in his own way,—that is the essence of the second commandment. The first is, "Thou shall have no other God," and the second virtually is, "Thou shalt not make any graven image to represent God, nor bow down to it, nor worship it." Moses made the rebellious people drink their God, as a punishment, but in these times persons live among us who literally eat their God as an act of devotion. The high spiritual mystery in which we are described as spiritually feeding upon our Lord Jesus has my deepest and most solemn reverence, but the superstitious opinion that men can and do literally eat the flesh of Christ under the form of consecrated bread arouses my abhorrence and disgust. The worship of what is called the Blessed Sacrament is as vile an idolatry as the worship by the Egyptians of onions and other pot-herbs which grew in their own gardens. There is not a pin to choose between the one and the other: and yet this is getting to be common. Bread, which is nothing but bread, and when you have said all you can say over it still remains bread, must not be produced in a court of law; or if it be so produced, a great bishop, who should know better, assures his brethren that he has taken care that it is reverently consumed. I wonder what became of the mouldy bread? Oh, that ever I, an Englishman, should be forced to believe that another Englishman in this nineteenth century reverences the baker's paste! Great God in heaven, is this the country of Latimer? is this the land of gospel light? or have we clean gone back to Rome, and all its idolatries? I want you to be very stiff and straight

about this. Do not pay religious honour to anything which can be seen by the eyes: worship no symbol however ancient: worship God only. Abhor every act which approximates to reverence paid to pictures, images, crucifixes, pyxes, wafers, chalices, or altars. Away with the whole idolatrous business: no epithet of scorn will be misapplied if it be turned against these superstitions. I will not now quote the words of ridicule which our fathers poured upon this wickedness, but I beseech you follow them in sternly refusing by word, or look, or sign to pay the slightest regard for objects of superstitious reverence, lest by mingling with the heathen you incur their guilt. These idolatrous Israelites would have pleaded that they did not worship the golden calf, but they worshipped Jehovah under the figure of a bull; and then they said, "See what a beautiful emblem it is! The bull is the image of strength, and God is almighty. How instructive it is! The ox ploughs our fields, and so produces our harvests,—what a teaching symbol of the goodness of God! Many of the common people will learn more from this than from a sermon." Certain artistic people would add, each one in his own manner, "This symbolic worship is so tasteful that it helps me to worship. When I was in the camp, and there was no golden image, I could never enter into such a bare worship, but I greatly admire this decorous and hearty service. The extemporary prayers of Moses and his brother were too poor for me. That beautiful bull is æsthetic, and arouses thought and emotion, and the ceremonial of Apis is to my mind quite a model. Give me a little of Israelitish-Egyptian, in which you have the old embellished by the new, and by the help of music and genuflections I can indeed adore." You know who they are who talk in this fashion nowadays.

Afterwards came the popular sports—for it is written of the people "they ate and they drank, and they rose up to play": the superstitious are usually fond of vain amusements. The Laudean churchman admired The Book of Sports. The book of sports usually gets upon the same shelf as the book of ceremonies. "Oh, that is the religion for me," cries one; "none of your straight-laced talk about worshipping God in spirit and in truth." My brethren, I want you to feel that you are on God's side about this; for every symbol, I repeat it, whether image, picture, bread, or whatsoever you please, must be denounced if it be set up as an object of worship. Whereas the bread and wine are appointed by our Lord Jesus to be used for a memorial of him, they are so to be used with loving thoughtfulness, but we must not, we dare not, pay the slightest worship to them, for that were to make sin of the blackest dye out of the tenderest of all memories.

The next point is, I would to God we were on the Lord's side in view of *the sinful amusements which appear to have such charms for many* that even Christian people go quite as far as they should in reference to them. When they had bowed before this golden calf they "rose up to play," and very pretty play it was. It does not bear explanation. There is about the world a good deal of this "playing." Beware, I pray you, of every amusement which prevents your redeeming the time, or tends to pollute the mind. There are recreations of a healthy, manly, refreshing kind, but those which are of no possible service to you are unprofitable. The same spirit which made the Puritan

refuse to reverence the so-called holy days and holy things of superstition led him so to reverence God and his sacred law that he would not join in the debasing amusements of the period, which were, indeed, so gross as a rule that even irreligious people would not in these times endure them. We have somewhat of the same protest to bear, and we must not flinch from it. We have better joys than the wanton and the foolish can bring to us. We say of a pastime—if this is pure and clean, if this is health-giving to the body, or restful and invigorating to the mind, we are not led by any old-fashioned whim to denounce it, and we do not denounce it: but if about it there is a taint of vice or a temptation that way, or if it be mere folly, we cannot endure it. We venture not where Jesus could not have gone. We would not go where we should be afraid to die, or should tremble to hear the trumpet announcing the coming of the Lord. Stern teaching this. Are you enough on the Lord's side to bear it? I pray God to put backbones into modern professors. Every other part of their bodies seems to grow firm except their spinal column, which remains soft and easily distorted. We want to be made resolute and faithful on the Lord's side. "Oh," says one, "these are small points." Yes, but I want you to be like the Spartan who painted on his shield a fly. "Your escutcheon is very small," said one. "True," said he, "but I hold it very close to the enemy." If our points of conscience seem to be small, so much the more need that we hold them in the very faces of those who think little of the things of God. A small point where God is involved is a great matter. Trifling with small things leads to trifling with great things.

Lastly, we need firm decision for God, and bold avowal of it in *this day of general tampering with principle.* Numbers of people whom we meet say, "You are right, no doubt, but—". Now, the Christian way of talking is, "If it be right we know no 'but'!" "Oh, yes," says one, "I agree that it is the straight thing, and yet—". A genuine Christian has no "and yets." If words plainly mean such and such a thing, he uses them in that sense, and not in an unnatural sense, and he never dares to say, "I know that such and such things are wrong, and they trouble my conscience, but still you see I am doing a vast amount of good, and we must submit to a little evil in order to gain a great good." The plain Christian will do no evil that good may come: he loathes the Jesuitical notion. He believes that it is a great evil to attempt to do good by doing evil. To him truth, right, the teaching of God, the will of Christ, are supreme objects. Oh, that you all possessed this spirit and were steadfast in it. In your family circle, in your business everywhere, be true, be thorough, be upright, be godlike, be Christlike, and may the divine Spirit help you to this, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus xxxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—149, 135, 674.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 11TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—Romans viii. 26, 27.

THE Apostle Paul was writing to a tried and afflicted people, and one of his objects was to remind them of the rivers of comfort which were flowing near at hand. He first of all stirred up their pure minds by way of remembrance as to their sonship,—for saith he "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." They were, therefore, encouraged to take part and lot with Christ, the elder brother, with whom they had become joint heirs; and they were exhorted to suffer with him, that they might afterwards be glorified with him. All that they endured came from a Father's hand, and this should comfort them. A thousand sources of joy are opened in that one blessing of adoption. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have been begotten into the family of grace.

When Paul had alluded to that consoling subject he turned to the next ground of comfort—namely, that we are to be sustained under present trial by hope. There is an amazing glory in reserve for us, and though as yet we cannot enter upon it, but in harmony with the whole creation must continue to groan and travail, yet the hope itself should minister strength to us, and enable us patiently to bear "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment." This also is a truth full of sacred refreshment: hope sees a crown in reserve, mansions in readiness, and Jesus himself preparing a place for us, and by the rapturous sight she sustains the soul under the sorrows of the hour. Hope is the grand anchor by whose means we ride out the present storm.

The apostle then turns to a third source of comfort, namely, the abiding of the Holy Spirit in and with the Lord's people. He uses the word "likewise" to intimate that in the same manner as hope sustains the soul, so does the Holy Spirit strengthen us under trial. Hope operates spiritually upon our spiritual faculties, and so does the Holy

Spirit, in some mysterious way, divinely operate upon the new-born faculties of the believer, so that he is sustained under his infirmities. In his light shall we see light: I pray, therefore, that we may be helped of the Spirit while we consider his mysterious operations, that we may not fall into error or miss precious truth through blindness of heart.

The text speaks of "our infirmities," or as many translators put it in the singular—of "our infirmity." By this is intended our affliction, and the weakness which trouble discovers in us. The Holy Spirit helps us to bear the infirmity of our body and of our mind; he helps us to bear our cross, whether it be physical pain, or mental depression, or spiritual conflict, or slander, or poverty, or persecution. He helps our infirmity; and with a helper so divinely strong we need not fear for the result. God's grace will be sufficient for us; his strength will be made perfect in weakness.

I think, dear friends, you will all admit that if a man can pray, his trouble is at once lightened. When we feel that we have power with God and can obtain anything we ask for at his hands, then our difficulties cease to oppress us. We take our burden to our heavenly Father and tell it out in the accents of childlike confidence, and we come away quite content to bear whatever his holy will may lay upon us. Prayer is a great outlet for grief; it draws up the sluices, and abates the swelling flood, which else might be too strong for us. We bathe our wound in the lotion of prayer, and the pain is lulled, the fever is removed. But the worst of it is that in certain conditions of heart we cannot pray. We may be brought into such perturbation of mind, and perplexity of heart, that we do not know how to pray. We see the mercy-seat, and we perceive that God will hear us: we have no doubt about that, for we know that we are his own favoured children, and yet we hardly know what to desire. We fall into such heaviness of spirit, and entanglement of thought, that the one remedy of prayer, which we have always found to be unfailing, appears to be taken from us. Here, then, in the nick of time, as a very present help in time of trouble, comes in the Holy Spirit. He draws near to teach us how to pray, and in this way he helps our infirmity, relieves our suffering, and enables us to bear the heavy burden without fainting under the load.

At this time our subjects for consideration shall be, firstly, *the help which the Holy Spirit gives:* secondly, *the prayers which he inspires;* and thirdly, *the success which such prayers are certain to obtain.*

I. First, then, let us consider THE HELP WHICH THE HOLY GHOST GIVES.

The help which the Holy Ghost renders to us meets the weakness which we deplore. As I have already said, if in time of trouble a man can pray, his burden loses its weight. If the believer can take anything and everything to God, then he learns to glory in infirmity, and to rejoice in tribulation; but sometimes we are in such confusion of mind that we know not what we should pray for as we ought. In a measure, through our ignorance, we never know what we should pray for until we are taught of the Spirit of God, but there are times when this beclouding of the soul is dense indeed, and we do not even know what would help us out of our trouble if we could obtain it. We see the disease, but the name of the medicine is not known to us. We look over the many things

which we might ask for of the Lord, and we feel that each of them would be helpful, but that none of them would precisely meet our case. For spiritual blessings which we know to be according to the divine will we could ask with confidence, but perhaps these would not meet our peculiar circumstances. There are other things for which we are allowed to ask, but we scarcely know whether, if we had them, they would really serve our turn, and we also feel a diffidence as to praying for them. In praying for temporal things we plead with measured voices, ever referring our petition for revision to the will of the Lord. Moses prayed that he might enter Canaan, but God denied him; and the man that was healed asked our Lord that he might be with him, but he received for answer, "Go home to thy friends." We pray evermore on such matters with this reserve, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." At times this very spirit of resignation appears to increase our mental difficulty, for we do not wish to ask for anything that would be contrary to the mind of God, and yet we must ask for something. We are reduced to such straits that we must pray, but what shall be the particular subject of prayer we cannot for a while make out. Even when ignorance and perplexity are removed, we know not what we should pray for "as we ought." When we know the matter of prayer, we yet fail to pray in a right manner. We ask, but we are afraid that we shall not have, because we do not exercise the thought, or the faith, which we judge to be essential to prayer. We cannot at times command even the earnestness which is the life of supplication: a torpor steals over us, our heart is chilled, our hand is numbed, and we cannot wrestle with the angel. We know what to pray for as to objects, but we do not know what to pray for "*as we ought.*" It is the manner of the prayer which perplexes us, even when the matter is decided upon. How can I pray? My mind wanders: I chatter like a crane; I roar like a beast in pain; I moan in the brokenness of my heart, but oh, my God, I know not what it is my inmost spirit needs; or if I know it, I know not how to frame my petition aright before thee. I know not how to open my lips in thy majestic presence: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. My spiritual distress robs me of the power to pour out my heart before my God. Now, beloved, it is in such a plight as this that the Holy Ghost aids us with his divine help, and hence he is "a very present help in time of trouble."

Coming to our aid in our bewilderment *he instructs us.* This is one of his frequent operations upon the mind of the believer: "he shall teach you all things." He instructs us as to our need, and as to the promises of God which refer to that need. He shows us where our deficiencies are, what our sins are, and what our necessities are; he sheds a light upon our condition, and makes us feel deeply our helplessness, sinfulness, and dire poverty; and then he casts the same light upon the promises of the Word, and lays home to the heart that very text which was intended to meet the occasion—the precise promise which was framed with foresight of our present distress. In that light he makes the promise shine in all its truthfulness, certainty, sweetness, and suitability, so that we, poor trembling sons of men, dare take that word into our mouth which first came out of God's mouth, and then come with it as an argument, and plead it before the throne of the heavenly

grace. Our prevalence in prayer lies in the plea, "Lord, do as thou hast said." How greatly we ought to value the Holy Spirit, because when we are in the dark he gives us light, and when our perplexed spirit is so befogged and beclouded that it cannot see its own need, and cannot find out the appropriate promise in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God comes in and teaches us all things, and brings all things to our remembrance, whatsoever our Lord has told us. He guides us in prayer, and thus he helps our infirmity.

But the blessed Spirit does more than this, he will often *direct the mind to the special subject of prayer*. He dwells within us as a counsellor, and points out to us what it is we should seek at the hands of God. We do not know why it is so, but we sometimes find our minds carried as by a strong under current into a particular line of prayer for some one definite object. It is not merely that our judgment leads us in that direction, though usually the Spirit of God acts upon us by enlightening our judgment, but we often feel an unaccountable and irresistible desire rising again and again within our heart, and this so presses upon us, that we not only utter the desire before God at our ordinary times for prayer, but we feel it crying in our hearts all the day long, almost to the supplanting of all other considerations. At such times we should thank God for direction and give our desire a clear road: the Holy Spirit is granting us inward direction as to how we should order our petitions before the throne of grace, and we may now reckon upon good success in our pleadings. Such guidance will the Spirit give to each of you if you will ask him to illuminate you. He will guide you both negatively and positively. Negatively, he will forbid you to pray for such and such a thing, even as Paul essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not: and, on the other hand, he will cause you to hear a cry within your soul which shall guide your petitions, even as he made Paul hear the cry from Macedonia, saying, "Come over and help us." The Spirit teaches wisely, as no other teacher can do. Those who obey his promptings shall not walk in darkness. He leads the spiritual eye to take good and steady aim at the very centre of the target, and thus we hit the mark in our pleadings.

Nor is this all, for the Spirit of God is not sent merely to guide and help our devotion, but *he himself "maketh intercession for us"* according to the will of God. By this expression it cannot be meant that the Holy Spirit ever groans or personally prays; but that *he excites intense desire and creates unutterable groanings in us*, and these are ascribed to him. Even as Solomon built the temple because he superintended and ordained all, and yet I know not that he ever fashioned a timber or prepared a stone, so doth the Holy Spirit pray and plead within us by leading us to pray and plead. This he does by arousing our desires. The Holy Spirit has a wonderful power over renewed hearts, as much power as the skilful minstrel hath over the strings among which he lays his accustomed hand. The influences of the Holy Ghost at times pass through the soul like winds through an Eolian harp, creating and inspiring sweet notes of gratitude and tones of desire, to which we should have been strangers if it had not been for his divine visitation. He knows how to create in our spirit hunger and thirst for good things. He can arouse us from our spiritual lethargy, he can warm us out of our luke-

warmness, he can enable us when we are on our knees to rise above the ordinary routine of prayer into that victorious importunity against which nothing can stand. He can lay certain desires so pressingly upon our hearts that we can never rest till they are fulfilled. He can make the zeal for God's house to eat us up, and the passion for God's glory to be like a fire within our bones; and this is one part of that process by which in inspiring our prayers he helps our infirmity. True Advocate is he, and Comforter most effectual. Blessed be his name.

The Holy Spirit also divinely operates in *the strengthening of the faith of believers*. That faith is at first of his creating, and afterwards it is of his sustaining and increasing: and oh, brothers and sisters, have you not often felt your faith rise in proportion to your trials? Have you not, like Noah's ark, mounted towards heaven as the flood deepened around you? You have felt as sure about the promise as you felt about the trial. The affliction was, as it were, in your very bones, but the promise was also in your very heart. You could not doubt the affliction, for you smarted under it, but you might almost as soon have doubted that you were afflicted as have doubted the divine help, for your confidence was firm and unmoved. The greatest faith is only what God has a right to expect from us, yet do we never exhibit it except as the Holy Ghost strengthens our confidence, and opens up before us the covenant with all its seals and securities. He it is that leads our soul to cry, "Though my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." Blessed be the Divine Spirit then, that since faith is essential to prevailing prayer, he helps us in supplication by increasing our faith. Without faith prayer cannot speed, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, and such an one may not expect anything of the Lord; happy are we when the Holy Spirit removes our wavering, and enables us like Abraham to believe without staggering, knowing full well that he who has promised is able also to perform.

By three figures I will endeavour to describe the work of the Spirit of God in this matter, though they all fall short, and indeed all that I can say must fall infinitely short of the glory of his work. The actual mode of his working upon the mind we may not attempt to explain; it remains a mystery, and it would be an unholy intrusion to attempt to remove the veil. There is no difficulty in our believing that as one human mind operates upon another mind, so does the Holy Spirit influence our spirits. We are forced to use words if we would influence our fellow-men, but the Spirit of God can operate upon the human mind more directly, and communicate with it in silence. Into that matter, however, we will not dive lest we intrude where our knowledge would be drowned by our presumption.

My illustrations do not touch the mystery, but set forth the grace. The Holy Spirit acts to his people somewhat *as a prompter to a reciter*. A man has to deliver a piece which he has learned; but his memory is treacherous, and therefore somewhere out of sight there is a prompter, so that when the speaker is at a loss and might use a wrong word, a whisper is heard, which suggests the right one. When the speaker has almost lost the thread of his discourse he turns his ear, and the prompter gives him the catch-word and aids his memory. If I may be allowed

the simile, I would say that this represents in part the work of the Spirit of God in us,—suggesting to us the right desire, and bringing all things to our remembrance whatsoever Christ has told us. In prayer we should often come to a dead stand, but he incites, suggests, and inspires, and so we go onward. In prayer we might grow weary, but the Comforter encourages and refreshes us with cheering thoughts. When, indeed, we are in our bewilderment almost driven to give up prayer, the whisper of his love drops a live coal from off the altar into our soul, and our hearts glow with greater ardour than before. Regard the Holy Spirit as your prompter, and let your ear be opened to his voice.

But he is much more than this. Let me attempt a second simile: he is *as an advocate to one in peril at law.* Suppose that a poor man had a great law-suit, touching his whole estate, and he was forced personally to go into court and plead his own cause, and speak up for his rights. If he were an uneducated man he would be in a poor plight. An adversary in the court might plead against him, and overthrow him, for he could not answer him. This poor man knows very little about the law, and is quite unable to meet his cunning opponent. Suppose one who was perfect in the law should take up his cause warmly, and come and live with him, and use all his knowledge so as to prepare his case for him, draw up his petitions for him, and fill his mouth with arguments,—would not that be a grand relief? This counsellor would suggest the line of pleading, arrange the arguments, and put them into right courtly language. When the poor man was baffled by a question asked in court, he would run home and ask his adviser, and he would tell him exactly how to meet the objector. Suppose, too, that when he had to plead with the judge himself, this advocate at home should teach him how to behave and what to urge, and encourage him to hope that he would prevail,—would not this be a great boon? Who would be the pleader in such a case? The poor client would plead, but still, when he won the suit, he would trace it all to the advocate who lived at home, and gave him counsel: indeed, it would be the advocate pleading for him, even while he pleaded himself. This is an instructive emblem of a great fact. Within this narrow house of my body, this tenement of clay, if I be a true believer, there dwells the Holy Ghost, and when I desire to pray I may ask him what I should pray for as I ought, and he will help me. He will write the prayers which I ought to offer upon the tablets of my heart, and I shall see them there, and so I shall be taught how to plead. It will be the Spirit's own self pleading in me, and by me, and through me, before the throne of grace. What a happy man in his law-suit would such a poor man be, and how happy are you and I that we have the Holy Ghost to be our Counsellor!

Yet one more illustration: it is that of *a father aiding his boy.* Suppose it to be a time of war centuries back. Old English warfare was then conducted by bowmen to a great extent. Here is a youth who is to be initiated in the art of archery, and therefore he carries a bow. It is a strong bow, and therefore very hard to draw; indeed, it requires more strength than the urchin can summon to bend it. See how his father teaches him. "Put your right hand here, my boy, and place your left hand so. Now pull"; and as the youth pulls, his father's hands are on his hands, and the bow is drawn. The lad draws the bow: ay, but

it is quite as much his father, too. We cannot draw the bow of prayer alone. Sometimes a bow of steel is not broken by our hands, for we cannot even bend it; and then the Holy Ghost puts his mighty hand over ours, and covers our weakness so that we draw; and lo, what splendid drawing of the bow it is then! The bow bends so easily we wonder how it is; away flies the arrow, and it pierces the very centre of the target, for he who giveth the strength directeth the aim. We rejoice to think that we have won the day, but it was his secret might that made us strong, and to him be the glory of it.

Thus have I tried to set forth the cheering fact that the Spirit helps the people of God.

II. Our second subject is THE PRAYER WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRES, or that part of prayer which is especially and peculiarly the work of the Spirit of God. The text says, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is not the Spirit that groans, but we that groan; but as I have shown you, the Spirit excites the emotion which causes us to groan.

It is clear then the prayers which are indited in us by the Spirit of God are *those which arise from our inmost soul*. A man's *heart* is moved when he groans. A groan is a matter about which there is no hypocrisy. A groan cometh not from the lips, but from the heart. A groan then is a part of prayer which we owe to the Holy Ghost, and the same is true of all the prayer which wells up from the deep fountains of our inner life. The prophet cried, "My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart: my heart maketh a noise in me." This deep ground-swell of desire, this tidal motion of the life-floods is caused by the Holy Spirit. His work is never superficial, but always deep and inward.

Such prayers will rise within us when the mind is far too troubled to let us speak. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, and then it is that we groan, or utter some other inarticulate sound. Hezekiah said, "like a crane or a swallow did I chatter." The psalmist said, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." In another place he said, "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart"; but he added, "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." The sighing of the prisoner surely cometh up into the ears of the Lord. There is real prayer in these "groanings that cannot be uttered." It is the power of the Holy Ghost in us which creates all real prayer, even that which takes the form of a groan because the mind is incapable, by reason of its bewilderment and grief, of clothing its emotion in words. I pray you never think lightly of the supplications of your anguish. Rather judge that such prayers are like Jabez, of whom it is written, that "he was more honourable than his brethren, because his mother bare him with sorrow." That which is thrown up from the depth of the soul, when it is stirred with a terrible tempest, is more precious than pearl or coral, for it is the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

These prayers are sometimes "groanings that cannot be uttered," because *they concern such great things that they cannot be spoken.* I want, my Lord! I want, I want; I cannot tell thee what I want; but I seem to want all things. If it were some little thing, my narrow capacity could comprehend and describe it, but I need all

covenant blessings. Thou knowest what I have need of before I ask thee; and though I cannot go into each item of my need, I know it to be very great, and such as I myself can never estimate. I groan, for I can do no more. Prayers which are the offspring of great desires, sublime aspirations, and elevated designs are surely the work of the Holy Spirit, and their power within a man is frequently so great that he cannot find expression for them. Words fail, and even the sighs which try to embody them cannot be uttered.

But it may be, beloved, that *we groan because we are conscious of the littleness of our desire, and the narrowness of our faith.* The trial, too, may seem too mean to pray about. I have known what it is to feel as if I could not pray about a certain matter, and yet I have been obliged to groan about it. A thorn in the flesh may be as painful a thing as a sword in the bones, and yet we may go and beseech the Lord thrice about it, and getting no answer we may feel that we know not what to pray for as we ought; and yet it makes us groan. Yes, and with that natural groan there may go up an unutterable groaning of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, what a different view of prayer God has from that which men think to be the correct one. You may have seen very beautiful prayers in print, and you may have heard very charming compositions from the pulpit, but I trust you have not fallen in love with them. Judge these things rightly. I pray you never think well of *fine* prayers, for before the thrice holy God it ill becomes a sinful suppliant to play the orator. We heard of a certain clergyman who was said to have given forth "the finest prayer ever offered to a Boston audience." Just so! The Boston audience received the prayer, and there it ended. We want the mind of the Spirit in prayer, and not the mind of the flesh. The tail feathers of pride should be pulled out of our prayers, for they need only the wing feathers of faith; the peacock feathers of poetical expression are out of place before the throne of God. "Dear me, what remarkably beautiful language he used in prayer!" "What an intellectual treat his prayer was!" Yes, yes; but God looks at the heart. To him fine language is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but a groan has music in it. *We* do not like groans: our ears are much too delicate to tolerate such dreary sounds; but not so the great Father of spirits. A Methodist brother cries, "Amen," and you say, "I cannot bear such Methodistic noise"; no, but if it comes from the man's heart God can bear it. When you get upstairs into your chamber this evening to pray, and find you cannot pray, but have to moan out, "Lord, I am too full of anguish and too perplexed to pray, hear thou the voice of my roaring," though you reach to nothing else you will be really praying. When like David we can say, "I opened my mouth and panted," we are by no means in an ill state of mind. All fine language in prayer, and especially all intoning or performing of prayers, must be abhorrent to God; it is little short of profanity to offer solemn supplication to God after the manner called "intoning." The sighing of a true heart is infinitely more acceptable, for it is the work of the Spirit of God.

We may say of the prayers which the Holy Spirit works in us that they are *prayers of knowledge.* Notice, our difficulty is that we know not what we should pray for; but the Holy Spirit does know, and therefore he helps us by enabling us to pray intelligently, knowing what we are

asking for, so far as this knowledge is needful to valid prayer. The text speaks of the "mind of the Spirit." What a mind that must be!—the mind of that Spirit who arranged all the order which now pervades this earth! There was once chaos and confusion, but the Holy Spirit brooded over all, and his mind is the originator of that beautiful arrangement which we so admire in the visible creation. What a mind his must be! The Holy Spirit's mind is seen in our intercessions when under his sacred influence we order our case before the Lord, and plead with holy wisdom for things convenient and necessary. What wise and admirable desires must those be which the Spirit of Wisdom himself works in us!

Moreover, the Holy Spirit's intercession creates *prayers offered in a proper manner*. I showed you that the difficulty is that we know not what we should pray for "as we ought," and the Spirit meets that difficulty by making intercession for us in a right manner. The Holy Spirit works in us humility, earnestness, intensity, importunity, faith, and resignation, and all else that is acceptable to God in our supplications. We know not how to mingle these sacred spices in the incense of prayer. We, if left to ourselves at our very best, get too much of one ingredient or another, and spoil the sacred compound, but the Holy Spirit's intercessions have in them such a blessed blending of all that is good that they come up as a sweet perfume before the Lord. Spirit-taught prayers are offered as they ought to be. They are his own intercession in some respects, for we read that the Holy Spirit not only helps us to intercede but "maketh intercession." It is twice over declared in our text that he maketh intercession for us; and the meaning of this I tried to show when I described a father as putting his hands upon his child's hands. This is something more than helping us to pray, something more than encouraging us or directing us,—but I venture no further, except to say that he puts such force of his own mind into our poor weak thoughts and desires and hopes, that he himself maketh intercession for us, working in us to will and to pray according to his good pleasure.

I want you to notice, however, that *these intercessions of the Holy Spirit are only in the saints*. "He maketh intercession *for us*," and "He maketh intercession *for the saints*." Does he do nothing for sinners, then? Yes, he quickens sinners into spiritual life, and he strives with them to overcome their sinfulness and turn them into the right way; but in the saints he works with us and enables us to pray after his mind and according to the will of God. His intercession is not in or for the unregenerate. O, unbelievers you must first be made saints or you cannot feel the Spirit's intercession within you. What need we have to go to Christ for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, which is peculiar to the children of God, and can only be ours by faith in Christ Jesus! "To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God"; and to the sons of God alone cometh the Spirit of adoption, and all his helping grace. Unless we are the sons of God the Holy Spirit's indwelling shall not be ours: we are shut out from the intercession of the Holy Ghost, ay, and from the intercession of Jesus too, for he hath said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me."

Thus I have tried to show you the kind of prayer which the Spirit inspires.

III. Our third and last point is THE SURE SUCCESS OF ALL SUCH PRAYERS.

All the prayers which the Spirit of God inspires in us must succeed, because, first, *there is a meaning in them which God reads and approves.* When the Spirit of God writes a prayer upon a man's heart, the man himself may be in such a state of mind that he does not altogether know what it is. His interpretation of it is a groan, and that is all. Perhaps he does not even get so far as that in expressing the mind of the Spirit, but he feels groanings which he cannot utter, he cannot find a door of utterance for his inward grief. Yet our heavenly Father, who looks immediately upon the heart, reads what the Spirit of God has indited there, and does not need even our groans to explain the meaning. He reads the heart itself: "he knoweth," says the text, "what is the mind of the Spirit." The Spirit is one with the Father, and the Father knows what the Spirit means. The desires which the Spirit prompts may be too spiritual for such babes in grace as we are actually to describe or to express, and yet they are within us. We feel desires for things that we should never have thought of if he had not made us long for them; aspirations for blessings which as to the understanding of them are still above us, yet the Spirit writes the desire on the renewed mind, and the Father sees it. Now that which God reads in the heart and approves of, for the word to "know" in this case includes approval as well as the mere act of omniscience—what God sees and approves of in the heart must succeed. Did not Jesus say, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things before you ask them"? Did he not tell us this as an encouragement to believe that we shall receive all needful blessings? So it is with those prayers which are all broken up, wet with tears, and discordant with sighs and inarticulate expressions and heavings of the bosom, and sobbings of the heart and anguish and bitterness of spirit, our gracious Lord reads them as a man reads a book, and they are written in a character which he fully understands. To give a simple figure: if I were to come into your house I might find there a little child that cannot yet speak plainly. It cries for something, and it makes very odd and objectionable noises, combined with signs and movements, which are almost meaningless to a stranger, but his mother understands him, and attends to his little pleadings. A mother can translate baby-talk: she comprehends incomprehensible noises. Even so doth our Father in heaven know all about our poor baby talk, for our prayer is not much better. He knows and comprehends the cryings, and moanings, and sighings, and chatterings of his bewildered children. Yea, a tender mother knows her child's needs before the child knows what it wants. Perhaps the little one stutters, stammers, and cannot get its words out, but the mother sees what he would say, and takes the meaning. Even so we know concerning our great Father:—

> "He knows the thoughts we mean to speak,
> Ere from our opening lips they break."

Do you therefore rejoice in this, that because the prayers of the Spirit are known and understood of God, therefore they will be sure to speed.

The next argument for making us sure that they will speed is this—that *they are "the mind of the Spirit."* God the ever blessed is one, and there can be no division between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These divine persons always work together, and there is a common desire for the glory of each blessed Person of the Divine Unity, and therefore it cannot be conceived without profanity, that anything could be the mind of the Holy Spirit and not be the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son. The mind of God is one and harmonious; if, therefore, the Holy Spirit dwell in you, and he move you to any desire, then his mind is in your prayer, and it is not possible that the eternal Father should reject your petitions. That prayer which came from heaven will certainly go back to heaven. If the Holy Ghost prompts it, the Father must and will accept it, for it is not possible that he should put a slight upon the ever blessed and adorable Spirit.

But one more word, and that closes the argument, namely, that *the work of the Spirit in the heart is not only the mind of the Spirit which God knows, but it is also according to the will or mind of God,* for he never maketh intercession in us other than is consistent with the divine will. Now, the divine will or mind may be viewed two ways. First, there is the will declared in the proclamations of holiness by the Ten Commandments. The Spirit of God never prompts us to ask for anything that is unholy or inconsistent with the precepts of the Lord. Then secondly, there is the secret mind of God, the will of his eternal predestination and decree, of which we know nothing; but we do know this, that the Spirit of God never prompts us to ask anything which is contrary to the eternal purpose of God. Reflect for a moment: the Holy Spirit knows all the purposes of God, and when they are about to be fulfilled, he moves the children of God to pray about them, and so their prayers keep touch and tally with the divine decrees. Oh would you not pray confidently if you knew that your prayer corresponded with the sealed book of destiny? We may safely entreat the Lord to do what he has himself ordained to do. A carnal man draws the inference that if God has ordained an event we need not pray about it, but faith obediently draws the inference that the God who secretly ordained to give the blessing has openly commanded that we should pray for it, and therefore faith obediently prays. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and when God is about to bless his people his coming favour casts the shadow of prayer over the church. When he is about to favour an individual he casts the shadow of hopeful expectation over his soul. Our prayers, let men laugh at them as they will, and say there is no power in them, are the indicators of the movement of the wheels of Providence. Believing supplications are forecasts of the future. He who prayeth in faith is like the seer of old, he sees that which is yet to be: his holy expectancy, like a telescope, brings distant objects near to him, and things not seen as yet are visible to him. He is bold to declare that he has the petition which he has asked of God, and he therefore begins to rejoice and to praise God, even before the blessing has actually arrived. So it is: prayer prompted by the Holy Spirit is the footfall of the divine decree.

I conclude by saying, see, my dear hearers, the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit, for if the saints know not what they should pray for as

they ought; if consecrated men and women, with Christ suffering in them, still feel their need of the instruction of the Holy Spirit, how much more do you who are not saints, and have never given yourselves up to God, require divine teaching! Oh, that you would know and feel your dependence upon the Holy Ghost that he may prompt you this day to look to Jesus Christ for salvation. It is through the once crucified but now ascended Redeemer that this gift of the Spirit, this promise of the Father, is shed abroad upon men. May he who comes from Jesus lead you to Jesus.

And, then, O ye people of God, let this last thought abide with you,—what condescension is this that this Divine Person should dwell in you for ever, and that he should be with you to help your prayers. Listen to me for a moment. If I read in the Scriptures that in the most heroic acts of faith God the Holy Ghost helpeth his people, I can understand it; if I read that in the sweetest music of their songs when they worship best, and chant their loftiest strains before the Most High God, the Spirit helpeth them, I can understand it; and even if I hear that in their wrestling prayers and prevalent intercessions God the Holy Spirit helpeth them, I can understand it: but I bow with reverent amazement, my heart sinking into the dust with adoration, when I reflect that God the Holy Ghost helps us when we cannot speak, but only groan. Yea, and when we cannot even utter our groanings, he doth not only help us but he claims as his own particular creation the "groanings that cannot be uttered." This is condescension indeed! In deigning to help us in the grief that cannot even vent itself in groaning, he proves himself to be a true Comforter. O God, my God, thou hast not forsaken me: thou art not far from me, nor from the voice of my roaring. Thou didst for awhile leave thy Firstborn when he was made a curse for us, so that he cried in agony, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" but thou wilt not leave one of the "many brethren" for whom he died: thy Spirit shall be with them, and when they cannot so much as groan he will make intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. God bless you, my beloved brethren, and may you feel the Spirit of the Lord thus working in you and with you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans viii. 14 to end.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1009, 978, 460.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FEAR NOT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 9TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE SHOREDITCH TABERNACLE, ERECTED FOR THE CONGREGATION OF PASTOR W. CUFF.

"Fear not."—Revelation i. 17.

"FEAR not" is a plant which grows very plentifully in God's garden. If you look through the lily beds of Scripture you will continually find by the side of other flowers the sweet "Fear nots" peering out from among doctrines and precepts, even as violets look up from their hiding-places of green leaves. "Fear nots" bloomed in the old time, at the feet of Abraham, when he returned from fighting with the kings. Melchisedek blessed him, and the Lord comforted him. The patriarch might have been half afraid that he would always lead a troubled life, now that he had once drawn the sword; but the Lord came to him in vision, and said, "Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." If he had to undergo a soldier's toils, he should have a soldier's shield and a soldier's pay, and both should be exceeding great, for he should find them both in God. After you have been fighting battles for Christ you may feel weary and worried, and then your great Melchisedek will refresh you with bread and wine, and whisper in your ear "Fear not."

A "Fear not" was spoken to Isaac when he had dug wells, and the Philistines strove for them, and he, like the meek soul that he was, gave them up one by one to avoid a conflict. At last he settled down at Beersheba, and there the Lord appeared unto him, and said, "Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee." He was a feeble man, and therefore the Lord dealt tenderly with him. If any of you are meek and quiet spirits, and rather apt to tremble exceedingly, may the Lord often give you a blessed "Fear not" to wear in your bosoms, that its fragrance may comfort your hearts. Then there was Jacob. You know how troubled his life was, but when he heard that his beloved son whom he thought was dead was alive in Egypt, and was clothed with glory, and that he had sent for him to go down to see him, he was afraid to go till the Lord said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt," and gave him this encouraging promise, "I will go down with thee into Egypt." If any of you are making a great change in life and moving, perhaps, to the very ends of the earth, "fear not to go down into Egypt." Should God command you to go to the utmost verge of the green earth, to

rivers unknown to song, yet if he bids you go, fear not to go down into Egypt, for certainly he will be with you.

The Israelites at the Red Sea were afraid of Pharaoh, and then the Lord said to them, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of God." If you are brought to a pass to-night, and know not what to do, take the advice of Holy Scripture, and "Fear not"; but "stand still and see the salvation of God." As we observe the Scriptures we perceive that "Fear nots" are scattered throughout the Bible as the stars are sprinkled over the whole of the sky, but when we come to Isaiah we find constellations of them. When I was a boy I learnt Dr. Watts's catechism, and I am glad I did. One of its questions runs thus, "Who was Isaiah?" And the answer is, "He was that prophet who spake more of Jesus Christ than all the rest." Very well, and for that very reason—that he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest—he is richest in comfort to the people of God, and continually he is saying, "Fear not." Here are a few of his antidotes for the fever of fear: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "Fear not, I will help thee." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." "Fear not, I have redeemed thee." "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame"; and so on, I was going to say, "world without end." So abundant are these "Fear nots" that they grow like the king-cups and the daisies, and other sweet flowers of the meadows, among which the little children in the spring-time delight themselves. As to gathering them all, no one would attempt the task. The bank that is fullest of these beautiful flowers is that which Isaiah has cast up; go there and pluck them for yourselves.

Now I gather from the plentifulness of "Fear nots," even in the Old Testament, that the Lord does not wish his people to be afraid, that he is glad to see his people full of courage, and especially that he does not love them to be *afraid of him*. He would have his children treat him with confidence. Slavish fear may be thought to be congenial to the Old Testament, and yet it is not so, for there the Lord cries to his chosen, "Fear not."

When we come into the New Testament, there we see God coming more familiarly to men than ever before; not descending upon Paran with ten thousand flaming chariots, setting the mountain on a blaze, but coming down to Bethlehem in an infant's form, with angels chanting the joyful lay, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." The genius of the New Testament is drawing near to God: ceasing to tremble and beginning to trust, ceasing to be the slave and learning to be the child. Though in the precise form of it the words of my text were not very often spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, yet his whole life was one long proclamation of "Fear not." I think I shall give you to-night most of the instances in which our Lord himself expressly said "Fear not," and as each one I shall give you will either come from the lip of Christ, or else from Christ's own angel, sent to comfort one of his servants, I pray that it may come fresh from God to every tried and troubled believer, and that all of us together may receive for our different fears this one same solace from the mouth of the Eternal, "Thus saith the Lord unto thee, fear not."

Our first text you will kindly look for if you have your Bibles with I hope you all have them, for I love to hear the rustling of Bibles as we do in Scotland, but not often in England. Turn to the k of the Revelation, the first chapter, and the seventeenth verse, and e you will read that John beheld the Saviour in his glorious array, he says,

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right d upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."

ur first "Fear not" MEETS THE DREAD OCCASIONED BY THE JESTY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PERSON. You that know him hold him deepest reverence, even as John did when at the sight of his divine d he fell at his feet as dead. Did you ever think of Jesus as me, and try to form some idea of his grandeur, his triumph, and exaltation above the thrones and principalities of heaven? As r soul has extolled him, and your mind has been expanded with high ights of the all-glorious Son of God, has it not occurred to you ay within yourself, "How dare I think that he is my Beloved, that I am his? Could such majesty meet such misery? Could glory bring itself into union with such insignificance as mine?" I w you must have experienced that feeling; and yet you must not l to it, for our Lord Jesus, although he loves to see your holy awe, ld not have that reverence freeze into a chill reserve or a slavish ubling. No, though he be divine, he invites you to approach him out dread. Great as he is, you may dare to be free with him.

"Let us be simple with him then—
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

your Lord be glorious to you, but still let him be near you. Exalt on his throne, but remember that you sit there with him. However ious he may be, he has desired that you may behold his glory, and vith him where he is. To you hath he given to overcome, and to pon his throne even as he has overcome, and has sat down with the her upon his throne.

f you have studied the matchless purity of his character with ring admiration, you must have been amazed at the absolute perion of his manhood, and the glory of his moral and spiritual character. nuch times, if you have had a true sense of your own position, you e been ready to sink into the dust, and you have exclaimed, "Shall *he* h my feet? Shall *he* give himself for me? Can it be that he could e loved one so stained and polluted, so mean and so beggarly, so altoıer unworthy even to live, much less to be loved by such an altoıer lovely one?" But I pray you always to remember, when you k of his perfection, that he has perfection of mercy as well as of ness, and perfection of love to sinners as well as perfection of ed of sin; and that, guilty as you are, you must never doubt his tion, for he has pledged you in his heart's blood, and proved his by his death. Albeit that you are conscious of being less than ing and vanity, and know that Jesus is absolute perfection, yet rd him not with timorous dread, but draw near to him as confidently

as a child to its parent, or a wife to her husband. It is one of Satan's temptations to make us afraid of Christ. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. Why should you be afraid of Jesus when he tells you not to be? Why dread the Lamb of God? *He* says, "Fear not." It is not the preacher who cries "Fear not," but it is Jesus himself who whispers to his poor servant, fallen as dead at his feet, "Fear not: fear not." It will be disobedience, then, to be afraid. When those lips, which are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, say to me, "Child of mine, fear not," how can I be afraid? Your safety lies, remember, dear friend, in trusting Jesus, and not in being afraid of him. There was never a soul yet saved by being afraid of Christ: there was never a prodigal that found forgiveness yet by being afraid of his Father. This kind of fear wants casting out, for it hath torment. Jesus, our Lord, is great and good, but then he has chosen to become the Saviour of sinners, and we need not fear to approach him, for "this man receiveth sinners." A host that entertains at his table the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low, and bids them welcome, is not one to be feared. Remember that if you are honestly afraid of Jesus, you should be afraid of grieving him by being afraid of him. When the physician sees the patient shrinking from his knife he does not wonder, but when Jesus sees you shrinking from that hand which does not wound, but cures by its own wound, he looks with eyes of sorrow upon such fear. Why shrink from him? The little children ran into his arms. Why shrink from him? Nothing cuts him to the quick more than the unkind, ungenerous thought that he is unwilling to receive the guilty. If he meant to keep you at a distance he would have stopped in heaven; his coming here cannot mean anything else than love to the perishing: therefore do not grieve him by being afraid of him. Remember that his truthfulness forbids the rejection of any that ever come to him, since he has pledged his word that he will in no wise cast them out. You need not therefore be afraid that *you* especially may not come. I had a letter but this week, in which one poor soul says, "I believe that I am the worst person that ever lived: though not in outward appearance, yet in heart. I believe that all other sorts of people feel more than I do, or have some one point in which they are better than I am, but I am the worst of all, and I fear that Jesus will never look on me." Downcast soul, there is no true ground for such a suspicion. If you had a devil in you, you might still come to Christ; and if there were a legion of devils in you —and I do not quite know how many made up a legion; but if there were so many that you could not count them—yet you might come with all the devils in hell in you and he still would not frown upon you, but he would cast the devils out of you. Oh, be not afraid to come to him whose wounds invite you. The blessed Saviour who receiveth sinners loves not that you should stay away through fear.

I know what some of you are doing: you are trying to get to heaven by a roundabout road. The late Emperor of Russia, when the railway was to be made between Moscow and St. Petersburg, employed a great number of engineers in making plans. He looked over many of their maps, and at last, like the practical man that he was, he said, "Here, bring me a ruler." They brought him a ruler: he took a pencil, and

g a straight line he said, "That is the way to engineer it: we want
er plan than one straight line." There are a great many ways
ineering souls to heaven; but the only one that is worth con-
g is this:—Draw a straight line to Christ at once. Did I hear
akened soul say, "I should like to talk to Mr. Cuff"? By all
talk to him, but do not stop *at* that, nor stop *for* that. Go to
first. "Oh, but I should like to talk with a good woman—
Christian lady." I recommend you to go to Jesus Christ at once,
e the lady afterwards. It is all very well to have an enquiry-
nd I have not a word to say against it, but the best enquiry-
n the world is your own bedroom. Go and enquire of Christ
t away. We may make our Christian workers and leaders into
riests if we do not mind what we are at. There must be nobody
n a soul and Christ. Blind souls will never get their eyes opened
the kind hands of all the good people in Shoreditch, or in all
a. Christ's hands can give sight, and only his; and you may get
ist to-night. "Which way?" say you. By no movement of
ody, but by a motion of your mind. Turn your thoughts towards
our desires towards him, your trust towards him. Look to him
e. May the Holy Ghost lead you to trust him now, and he will
u.

s have I tried very briefly to set forth the fear which arises from
jesty of the divine person of Christ, for which he prescribes this
'Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and
ad; and behold I am alive for evermore." Do not be afraid of
ecause of his glory, nor stand back because of your unfitness.
want a Mediator between your soul and God; but you do *not*
mediator between your souls and Christ. You may come to
raight away just as you are.

"Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."

a straight line,—remember that, a straight line from your lost
on to Christ, and let your resolve be: I, being lost, trust Jesus to
e, and I am saved.

The second "Fear not" is equally precious. Turn to Luke,
nth chapter and the fiftieth verse, the chapter we were reading
w, and there you will find that Jairus had a little daughter, who
ad, and they said—

*uble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him,
Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*"

MEETS THE FEAR ARISING OUT OF THE DESPERATENESS OF THE
F HAND. The little girl was actually dead; and yet Jesus said,
not." Here is comfort *as to others*. Dear friend, if you have
aying for a long time about anyone who is near and dear to you,
ou have been longing for that person's salvation, and your
has not been answered, and that person has even gone from bad
e, I want you not to give up praying. "Oh, but," you say, "I
ting very downcast, for they are plunging into deeper sin."
ere is cause for fear, but not while Jesus lives, for he can reach
o long as it remains this side the gates of death. Jesus can

still save a man while he is yet out of hell. Continue to pray, and fear not. No case is absolutely hopeless while Jesus lives. Love will still prevail. We meet sometimes with amazing instances where prayer is heard at last. I have read of a woman who prayed long for her husband. She used to attend a certain meeting-house in the north of England, but her husband never went with her. He was a drinking, swearing man, and she had much anguish of heart about him. She never ceased to pray, and yet she never saw any result. She went to the meeting-house quite alone, with this exception, that a dog always went with her, and this faithful animal would curl himself up under the seat, and lie quiet during the service. When she was dead, her husband was still unsaved, but doggie went to the meeting-house. His master wondered whatever the faithful animal did at the service. Curiosity made him follow the good creature. The dog led him down the aisle to his dear old mistress's seat. The man sat on that seat, and the dog curled himself up as usual. God guided the minister that day; the word came with power, and that man wept till he found the Saviour. Never give up your husbands, good women, for the Lord may even use a dog to bring them to Christ when you are dead and gone. Never give up praying, hoping, and expecting. Fear not; believe only, and you shall have your heart's desire. Pray for them as long as there is breath in your body and theirs. It is of no use praying for them when they are dead, but as long as they are here never cease to plead with God on their account. Persons have been converted to God under very extraordinary circumstances. Two base fellows thought to rob the house of a godly man, the vicar of the parish, who was accustomed on Sunday evening to gather his poor people together in his parlour and preach the gospel to them. This was a little extra work after the day's services. The thieves thought that if they could get into the house with the people during the evening, and hide themselves away, they could rob the house easily during the night; and so they got into the next room to that in which the Word was preached. But they never robbed that house, for through the godly vicar's address the Lord Jesus Christ stole away their hearts, and they came forth to confess their sin, and to become followers of the Saviour. You do not know how far the arrows of the conquering Saviour may fly. Never despair. Jesus Christ comforts you in reference to the souls of those for whom you are anxious, by saying "Fear not; believe only, and they shall be made whole." Labour for them, pray for them, and believe that Jesus Christ can save them.

Let the same truth be fully believed *as to yourselves*. O my dear hearer, you may think you are too far gone for salvation, but you are not. You may imagine that your case is altogether a lot out of the catalogue; but you are just the sort of person that Jesus Christ saves. If he never saved odd people he would never have saved me, for many men judge me to be a singular being. If you are another oddity, come along with me, and let us trust in him. If you are the one man that is a little over the line of mercy, you are the very man that Jesus Christ chooses to bless, for he loves to save extraordinary sinners. He is a very extraordinary Saviour; there never was another like him, and when he meets a sinner that is extraordinary, and never another

like him, he often takes him, and makes him one of his captains, as he did Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle. I do pray you "fear not" on account of the greatness of your sin. Be humbled on account of it, but do not despair about it. Are you old in iniquity? Are you deeply ingrained in transgression by long practice in it? Still doubt not the Redeemer's power. If your salvation rested on yourself you might despair, but the Lord has laid help on one that is mighty, even on his only-begotten Son, and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. O poor condemned sinner, look up and hope. O thou who hast heard the clang of the iron gate, thou who art shut up in despair, have hope, have brave hope, for Jesus saith to thee, "Fear not, believe only, and thou shalt be made whole." God grant that this gracious "Fear not" may be a comfort to some seeker here.

III. Our third "Fear not" is taken from Luke fifth, and the seventh verse, and perhaps what I am about to say will suit Mr. Cuff and other successful ministers:

"They came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

THIS MEETS THE FEAR WHICH ARISES OUT OF THE GREATNESS OF HIS GOODNESS. If the Lord has made any one of you successful in his service, if you are made of the same stuff as I am, your success lays you low before his throne. Time was when everybody was abusing me, and then I rejoiced and gloried in God: I had happy days when my name was cast out as evil. But when the Lord in his great mercy gave me souls for my hire, and began to build up the church at the Tabernacle, I became subject thereupon to such sinking of spirits that I can scarcely tell you how crushed I have been under the weight of divine mercy. I should not wonder if my dear brother Cuff has gone home, after seeing a crowd at the Town Hall, and after seeing this great house full, and has said, "Lord, why hast thou been pleased to use *me* and to favour *me?*" If any of you are blessed in your work, as I trust you may be, you may also be made to feel the mysterious depression which takes the place of self-exaltation in those who know that every good gift comes from God alone.

Fear because of the Lord's great goodness also comes in another shape: a person says, "I believe that I am saved for I have looked to Christ, and I am lightened. And yet can it be?" The thought suggests itself, "It is too good to be true." Now, look you, sirs, if it were not supremely good it would not be true. It is because it is so excessively good that it is true. As one said of God's mercy when his friend was astonished at it, "I am astonished too; but still it is just like him." It is just the way of God, you know, to bless a poor sinner beyond all that he can ask or think. It is the way with God to astonish us with his grace. When the Lord sends his mercy it never rains, but it pours. He deluges the desert. He not only gives enough to moisten,

but enough to drench the furrows. He makes the wilderness a standing pool of water, and the thirsty land springs of water. Do not, therefore, doubt the genuineness of his mercy because of its greatness.

But some timorous professors say, "This is a great work which God is doing here, but it is too great to last." Yes, that too I have heard, and the gathering of many to hear the gospel has been sneered at as "a nine days' wonder." Alas! our unbelief has said, "It cannot last"; and yet it has lasted. The path of faith to my mind is very like that of a man walking on a tight-rope high up in the air, and you always seem half afraid that he will fall; yet if the Lord placed us on a spider's web as high as the Alps he would not let us slip. The walk of faith is like going up an invisible staircase. When you have climbed and climbed, you sometimes cannot see one single step before you. Each step seems to be upon the air, and yet when you put your foot down it is solid granite firmer than the earth itself. There are times when Satan whispers, "God will leave you. God will forsake you. He has done all this for you, and yet he will leave you." Ah, but he never will, for his faithfulness never fails. We must not be like the countryman who, when he had to cross the river, said that he would wait till the stream was dry, for it could not run so fast as that long, but must all run away. We have feared that we should live till the river of God's mercy had run dry; but it never has, and it never will. Some professors say when a great number of sinners are converted, "Oh, well, you see there are so many, they cannot be all genuine." That is why I think the work to be real. When I see a little peddling work of one every now and then, I am far more inclined to say, "Well, I do not know. It may be of God, but it is not a very great affair, and he generally does great things when his Spirit is poured out." But when I see him calling three thousand in one day, I say, "This is the finger of God. I am sure of it." I would be the last to despise the day of small things, but I must also speak up for the day of great things. I have noticed that those who are added to the church at times of revival are people that hold on quite as well as others, and I think better than others. That is my experience; because at other times we are apt to say, "there are so few coming forward; we must not be quite so strict in examining them;" but when there is a great number we feel that we can afford to be particular, and we are naturally more strict. I do not justify this, but I am sure that the tendency exists. I believe in a great work; and when I see our Lord filling the net, I think I hear him saying to me, "Do not be afraid because the fish make the boat sink down to the water's edge. Fear not. You shall get many more than these. Let down your net again."

Let us not doubt because it seems too wonderful that God should bless us to a great extent. It is wonderful, but let us have no doubt about it. Can the Lord use such poor worms as we are? He does use us. Do not ask how he can do it if he does do it. He is a God of sovereignty, and he uses whom he wills, and if he blesses you, give him the glory of it: but do not let the greatness of his grace cause you to mistrust. You have seen a painter with his palette on his finger, and he has ugly little daubs of paint upon the palette.

m he do with those spots? Go in and see his picture. lendid painting! What lights! What shades! Where are ibs of paint? They have been used up upon the picture. What! nake that picture out of those ugly spots of paint? Yes, that was made out of those little daubs of colour! That is the painters. In even a wiser way does Jesus act towards us. s us, poor smudges of paint, and he makes the blessed pic- his grace out of us; for it is neither the brush he uses, paint he uses, but it is the skill of his own hand which does nd unto his name be the praise. Now, poor worker, do afraid. The great Artist will take you in hand, and make g of you. I forget how much can be made out of a penny- iron, but I do know that there are methods by which a rth of iron can be so moulded, and wrought, and fashioned, an become worth a hundred times what it was before it came e manufacturer's hand. What the Lord can make of such atures as we are, who shall tell? He says, "Fear not"; and I do not fear. You who make up the church in Shoreditch, do fraid because the Lord fills this great house. Beckon to your that are in the other ships to come and help you. Help those out to fill their boats, and may God send you a long and con- vival of religion in this whole region. Let not the old folks tened at the Lord's glorious working: believe in it and re- Why, if the Lord were to convert three thousand in one day in , there are numbers who would say, "I do not believe in it, er saw anything like it." Many churches would say, "We do t that we ought to take them in just yet." At Pentecost they the converts the same day. You see, the church was ready to em: we have no church in England that would do that: I one, and we have no Christian people who would approve of ere done, but they would as a rule murmur that it was rash m, and an ill-advised haste. "*I believe in the Holy Ghost.*" hat, but do we practically believe it? God grant we may.

But now I turn to a fourth "Fear not," which we find in the Matthew, the twenty-eighth verse. I will not turn to it, but t tell you of it because there are many of you here who need rt.

not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

S MEANT TO REMOVE THE FEAR ARISING OUT OF SHARP PER-

. In a region like this, when a working man is converted Christ, his friends and his neighbours soon find it out, and y to say that working-men, as a rule, do not treat Christian . They used to say in America, "It is a free country; every whip his own nigger," and so it is here: it is a free country, may swear at his fellow-workman for worshipping God. It is iece of meanness that men should molest their fellows for being you have a right to swear, I have a right to sing psalms; and e a right to break the Sabbath, I have a right to keep it, and I ht to go in and out of the workshop without being called

ill-names because I live in the fear of God. But the right is not always recognized. Some have to run the gauntlet from morning to night because they serve the Lord. Now, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not be afraid, though you are nothing but poor sheep, and you are sent out into the midst of wolves. Does it not seem as if our Lord could hardly have known what he was at when he said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves." Yet he made no mistake. Just think for a minute:—how many wolves are there in the world now? They have been eating up the sheep ever since they had a chance; but are there more wolves or more sheep alive at this day? Why, the wolves get fewer and fewer every day, till when a wolf comes down into the inhabited lands in France we have it reported in the paper, and we have not one animal of the kind in this country wild, though they used to abound here. The fact is, the sheep have driven out the wolves. It looked as if they would eat the sheep up, but the sheep have exterminated them. So it will be in the end with defenceless believers and raging persecutors; patient weakness will overcome passionate strength. Only be patient. You have an anvil in the shop: and you know how hard the hammer comes down on it. What does the anvil do? Why, bears it. You never saw the anvil get up and fight the hammer. Never. It stands still and takes the blows. Down comes the hammer. But now listen. How many hammers have been worn out to one anvil? Where it has stood for years, the old block of iron remains, ready to bear more strokes. The hammers will break, but not the anvil. Be you an anvil, brother. Be you the sheep, brother, still; for heavenly submission shall win the victory, and patient non-resistance shall come off more than a conqueror.

Do not fear, I pray you, so as to conceal your testimony. Tell out for Jesus Christ what he has done for you, and the more they blaspheme and persecute you, be you the more determined by God's grace that they shall not be able to find fault in your character, and that they shall know that you are a Christian man. Climb up the mast and nail the colours to it. Drive another nail to-night. Fix the colours to the mast-head. Say, "No, never by God's grace will I be ashamed of being a Christian. I might be ashamed if I were a drunkard. I might be ashamed if I were a swearer; but I never will be ashamed that I am a follower of the crucified Son of God."

O poor men and women, who have for the most part to bear the brunt of the world's assaults, God grant that you may not fear. Do not fall into doubt about your religion either. Do not be so afraid as to fall into questioning and unbelief. True religion never was in the majority, and never will be for many a year to come. You may rest assured that if we were to poll the world for any opinion, and if that opinion should be decided by a majority, it would be necessarily wrong. Now and then in one country the right prevails, but all the world over the seed of the serpent outnumber the seed of the woman. Blessed is he who can stand in a minority of one with God; for a minority of one for God is in the judgment of truth a majority. Count God with you, and you have more with you than all they that be against you.

V. I must not keep you much longer, for the heat grows great, and I fear some of you are fainting. Therefore I want to say another word which I should like you all to hear. This is the fifth "Fear

You will find it in Luke xii. verse 32. Christ preaching to his ples said,—

Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom."

IS MEANT TO PREVENT FEAR AS TO TEMPORAL THINGS. Now, I that this is a time in which many of God's people are much tried, hey tremble lest they should not be provided for. Hearken to this, d you escape from poverty by being frightened about it? Did fears ever make you any the richer? Have you not found it to in to rise up early and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of care- s when you have had no faith in God? Have you not learned ? And do you not know that if you are a child of God he will inly give you your food and raiment? Ah, I hear a heavy sigh one,—"It has been a hard winter." It is true, my friend, it has a hard winter. I dare say that the birds have found it so, and yet nday morning I noticed when I opened my window early that they singing very sweetly; and this morning, too, they broke forth in a s of harmonious song. You know what the little bird sings when s on a bare bough with the snow all around him? He chirps out—

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow."

n the sparrow's song, and try, if you can, to catch the spirit of ird which has no barn or storehouse, and yet is fed. There is this mfort you: "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have of." He understands your wants. Is it not enough for a child his father knows his needs? Rest in that, and be confident that y you shall be fed. You will not have much in this world, perhaps; ou shall have the kingdom. Be of good cheer about that. Your itance is yet to come; you shall have the kingdom. You have now a reversionary interest in eternal glory, and this involves nt supplies: he who promises the end will provide for the way. of the Lord's best people are those that have to suffer most, but it ause they can here glorify him most by suffering. I think the angels aven must almost envy a child of God who has the power and the lege to suffer for Christ's sake; for doubtless angels render perfect ce to the heavenly King, yet not by suffering. Theirs is active and assive obedience to the will of God. Methinks they will cluster d some of you in heaven, and say, "You lived down at Bethnal n, or Shoreditch. Ah, yes." The angels will say, "What sort of ace did you live in? One dark room? You were very poor: you out of work: and did you trust God?" The angels will be pleased u tell them, "Oh yes, we went to the heavenly Father still, and we 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'" That is the grandest ; that a man ever did say; at least, I think it is. Mr. Cuff says fine things, but he never uttered a nobler sentence than that,— ough he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The expression is sublime! n Job had lost everything, after being immensely rich, he sat on a hill, and scraped his sores, and he said, "Naked came I out of my er's womb, and naked shall I return thither." He was reduced e most abject want, and yet he added—"The Lord gave, and the

Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ye cherubim and seraphim, in all your songs no stanza excels that heroic verse. Angels cannot rise to such a height of sublime devotion to the Invisible One as Job did when in his misery he glorified his God by abiding confidence. Oh, you that are brought very low, you have grand opportunities for honouring God if you will but trust him. "Fear not." "Fear not."

"Fear not the loss of outward good,
He will for his provide,
Give them supplies of daily food,
And all they want beside."

And he will give you spiritual food too. When God saves his people he gives them spiritual food to live upon till they get to heaven. God does not give us treatment like that which the Duke of Alva measured out to a city which had surrendered. He agreed to give the inhabitants their lives, but when they complained that they were dying of hunger he maliciously replied, "I granted you your lives, but I did not promise you food." Our God does not talk so. He includes in the promise of salvation all that goes with it; and you shall have all you really want between here and heaven, wherefore fear not.

VI. Lastly, time fails me: but I was going to close with that word in the twenty-seventh of Acts, the twenty-fourth verse, where the Lord sent his angel to his servant Paul in the time of the shipwreck, and said to him,

"Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

So I pray God that all perils in the future—all imminent ills and dangers which surround you now—may not cause you to fear, for the Lord will not suffer a hair of your head to perish, but he that has made you will bear you through, and make you more than conquerors too.

Tried people of God, rest in the Lord, and your confidence shall be your strength. You have often heard of the boy on board ship in time of storm who was the only person that was not afraid. When they asked him why he did not fear, he said "Because my father is at the helm." We have still better cause for casting away all fear, for not only is our Father at the helm but our Father is everywhere, holding the winds and the waves in the hollow of his hand. No trouble can happen to you or to me but what he ordains or permits. No trial can come but what he will restrain and overrule. No evil can happen but what shall certainly work for good to them that love God. Therefore be not afraid. What though the howling tempest yell, and the ship creak and groan as she labours among the waves, and you think that nothing but destruction awaits you, fear not! Let not fear linger for a single moment in the presence of the eternal Christ who says, "It is I. Be not afraid." May God grant that his own "Fear not" may go home to the heart of every one here present in some form or other; and unto his name be glory, world without end. Amen.

N.B.—For the convenience of those who wish to purchase this sermon separately, it will be published as a little book. Price One Penny.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION BY WORKS, A CRIMINAL DOCTRINE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—Galatians ii. 21.

THE idea of salvation by the merit of our own works is exceedingly *insinuating*. It matters not how often it is refuted, it asserts itself again and again; and when it gains the least foothold it soon makes great advances. Hence Paul, who was determined to show it no quarter, opposed everything which bore its likeness. He was determined not to permit the thin end of the wedge to be introduced into the church, for well he knew that willing hands would soon be driving it home: hence when Peter sided with the Judaizing party, and seemed to favour those who demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised, our brave apostle withstood him to the face. He fought always for salvation by grace through faith, and contended strenuously against all thought of righteousness by obedience to the precepts of the ceremonial or the moral law. No one could be more explicit than he upon the doctrine that we are not justified or saved by works in any degree, but solely by the grace of God. His trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound, but gave forth the clear note, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Grace meant grace with him, and he could not endure any tampering with the matter, or any frittering away of its meaning.

So fascinating is the doctrine of legal righteousness that the only way to deal with it is Paul's way. Stamp it out. Cry war to the knife against it. Never yield to it; but remember the apostle's firmness, and how stoutly he held his ground: "To whom," saith he, "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour."

The error of salvation by works is exceedingly *plausible*. You will constantly hear it stated as a self-evident truth, and vindicated on account of its supposed practical usefulness, while the gospel doctrine of salvation by faith is railed at and accused of evil consequences. It is affirmed that if we preach salvation by good works we shall encourage virtue; and so it might seem in theory, but history proves by many instances that as a matter of fact where such doctrine

has been preached virtue has become singularly uncommon, and that in proportion as the merit of works has been cried up, morality has gone down. On the other hand, where justification by faith has been preached, conversions have followed, and purity of life has been produced even in the worst of men. Those who lead godly and gracious lives are ready to confess that the cause of their zeal for holiness lies in their faith in Christ Jesus; but where will you meet with a devout and upright man who glories in his own works?

Self-righteousness is *natural to our fallen humanity*. Hence it is the essence of all false religions. Be they what they may, they all agree in seeking salvation by our own deeds. He who worships his idols will torture his body, will fast, will perform long pilgrimages, and do or endure anything in order to merit salvation. The Romish Church holds up continually before the eyes of its votaries the prize to be earned by self-denial, by penance, by prayers, or by sacraments, or by some other performances of man. Go where you may, the natural religion of fallen man is salvation by his own merits. An old divine has well said, every man is born a heretic upon this point, and he naturally gravitates towards this heresy in one form or another. Self-salvation, either by his personal worthiness, or by his repentance, or by his resolves, is a hope ingrained in human nature, and very hard to remove. This foolishness is bound up in the heart of every child, and who shall get it out of him?

This erroneous idea *arises partly from ignorance*, for men are ignorant of the law of God, and of what holiness really is. If they knew that even an evil thought is a breach of the law, and that the law once broken in any point is altogether violated, they would be at once convinced that there can be no righteousness by the law to those who have already offended against it. They are also in great ignorance concerning themselves, for those very persons who talk about self-righteousness are as a rule openly chargeable with fault; and if not, were they to sit down and really look at their own lives, they would soon perceive even in their best works such impurity of motive beforehand, or such pride and self-congratulation afterwards, that they would see the gloss taken off from all their performances, and they would be utterly ashamed of them. Nor is it ignorance alone which leads men to self-righteousness, they are also deceived by *pride*. Man cannot endure to be saved on the footing of mercy; he loves not to plead guilty and throw himself on the favour of the great King; he cannot brook to be treated as a pauper, and blessed as a matter of charity; he desires to have a finger in his own salvation, and claim at least a little credit for it. Proud man will not have heaven itself upon terms of grace; but so long as he can he sets up one plea or another, and holds to his own righteousness as though it were his life. This self-confidence also arises from wicked *unbelief*, for through his self-conceit man will not believe God. Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than this,—that by the works of the law shall no man be justified, yet men in some shape or other stick to the hope of legal righteousness; they will have it that they must prepare for grace, or assist mercy, or in some degree deserve eternal life. They prefer their own flattering prejudices to the declaration of the heart-searching God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit

concerning the deceitfulness of the heart is cast aside, and the declaration of God that there is none that doeth good, no, not one, is altogether denied. Is not this a great evil? Self-righteousness is also much promoted by the almost universal *spirit of trifling* which is now abroad. Only while men trifle with themselves can they entertain the idea of personal merit before God. He who comes to serious thought, and begins to understand the character of God, before whom the heavens are not pure, and the angels are charged with folly,—he, I say, that comes to serious thought and beholds a true vision of God, abhors himself in dust and ashes, and is for ever silenced as to any thought of self-justification. It is because we do not seriously examine our condition that we think ourselves rich and increased in goods. A man may fancy that he is prospering in business, and yet he may be going back in the world. If he does not face his books or take stock, he may be living in a fool's paradise, spending largely when on the verge of bankruptcy. Many think well of themselves because they never think seriously. They do not look below the surface, and hence they are deceived by appearances. The most troublesome business to many men is thought; and the last thing they will do is to weigh their actions, or test their motives, or ponder their ways, to see whether things be right with them. Self-righteousness being supported by ignorance, by pride, by unbelief, and by the natural superficiality of the human mind, is strongly entrenched and cannot readily be driven out of men.

Yet self-righteousness is *evidently evil*, for it makes light of sin. It talks of merit in the case of one who has already transgressed, and boasts of excellence in reference to a fallen and depraved creature. It prattles of little faults, small failures, and slight omissions, and so makes sin to be a venial error which may be readily overlooked. Not so faith in God, for though it recognises pardon, yet that pardon is seen to come in a way which proves sin to be exceeding sinful. On the other hand, the doctrine of salvation by works has not a word of comfort in it for the fallen. It gives to the elder son all that his proud heart can claim, but for the prodigal it has no welcome. The law has no invitation for the sinner, for it knows nothing of mercy. If salvation be by the works of the law, what must become of the guilty, and the fallen, and the abandoned? By what hopes can these be recalled? This unmerciful doctrine bars the door of hope, and hands over the lost ones to the executioner, in order that the proud Pharisee may air his boastful righteousness, and thank God that he is not as other men are.

It is the intense selfishness of this doctrine which condemns it as an evil thing. It naturally exalts self. If a man conceives that he will be saved by his own works he thinks himself somewhat, and glories in the dignity of human nature: when he has been attentive to religious exercises he rubs his hands and feels that he deserves well of his Maker; he goes home to repeat his prayers, and ere he falls asleep he wonders how he can have grown to be so good and so much superior to those around him. When he walks abroad he feels as if he dwelt apart in native excellence, a person much distinguished from "the vulgar herd," a being whom to know is to admire. All the while he considers himself to be very humble, and is often amazed at his own condescension. What is this but a most hateful spirit? God, who sees the heart, loathes it.

He will accept the humble and the contrite, but he puts far from him those who glory in themselves. Indeed, my brethren, what have we to glory in? Is not every boast a lie? What is this self-hood but a peacock feather, fit only for the cap of a fool? May God deliver us from exalting self; and yet we cannot be delivered from so doing if we hold in any degree the doctrine of salvation by our own good works.

At this time I desire to shoot at the very heart of that soul-destroying doctrine, while I show you, in the first place, that *two great crimes are contained in the idea of self-justification.* When I have brought forth that indictment, I shall further endeavour to show that *these two great crimes are committed by many,* and then, thirdly, it will be a delight to assert that *the true believer does not fall into these crimes.* May God, the Holy Spirit, help us while meditating upon this important theme.

I. First, then, TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE CONTAINED IN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. These high crimes and misdemeanours are frustrating the grace of God, and making Christ to have died in vain.

The first is *the frustration of the grace of God.* The word here translated "frustrate" means to make void, to reject, to refuse, to regard as needless. Now, *he that hopes to be saved by his own righteousness rejects the grace or free favour of God, regards it as useless, and in that sense frustrates it.* It is clear, first, that if righteousness come by the law, the grace of God is no longer required. If we can be saved by our own merits we need justice, but we certainly do not want mercy. If we can keep the law, and claim to be accepted as a matter of debt, it is plain that we need not turn suppliants, and crave for mercy. Grace is a superfluity where merit can be proved. A man who can go into court with a clear case and a bold countenance asks not for mercy of the judge, and the offer of it would insult him. "Give me justice," he says; "give me my rights"; and he stands up for them as a brave Englishman should do. It is only when a man feels that the law condemns him that he puts in a plea for mercy. Nobody ever dreamed of recommending an innocent man to mercy. I say, then, that the man who believes that by keeping the law, or by practising ceremonies, or by undergoing religious performances, he can make himself acceptable before God, most decidedly puts the grace of God on one side as a superfluous thing as far as he is concerned. Is it not clearly so? And is not this a crimson crime—this frustration of the grace of God?

Next, *he makes the grace of God to be at least a secondary thing,* which is only a lower degree of the same error. Many think that they are to merit as much as they can by their own exertions, and then the grace of God will make up for the rest. The theory seems to be that we are to keep the law as far as we can, and this imperfect obedience is to stand good, as a sort of composition, say a shilling in the pound, or fifteen shillings in the pound, according as man judges of his own excellence; and then what is required over and above our own hard-earned money the grace of God will supply: in short, the plan is every man his own Saviour, and Jesus Christ and his grace make-weights for our deficiencies. Whether men see it or not, this admixture of law and grace is most dishonouring to the salvation of Jesus Christ. It makes the Saviour's work to be incomplete, though on the cross he cried, "It is finished." Yea, it even treats it as being utterly ineffectual, since it

appears to be of no avail till man's works are added to it. According to this notion, we are redeemed as much by our own doings as by the ransom price of Jesus' blood, and man and Christ go shares, both in the work and in the glory. This is an intense form of arrogant treason against the majesty of divine mercy: a capital crime, which will condemn all who continue in it. May God deliver us from thus insulting the throne of grace by bringing a purchase-price in our hand, as if we could deserve such peerless gifts of love.

More than that, he who trusts in himself, his feelings, his works, his prayers, or in anything except the grace of God, *virtually gives up trusting in the grace of God altogether:* for be it known unto you, that God's grace will never share the work with man's merit. As oil will not combine with water, so neither will human merit and heavenly mercy mix together. The apostle saith in Romans xi. 6, "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." You must either have salvation wholly because you deserve it, or wholly because God graciously bestows it though you do not deserve it. You must receive salvation at the Lord's hand either as a debt or as a charity, there can be no mingling of the ideas. That which is a pure donation of favour cannot also be a reward of personal deserving. A combination of the two principles of law and grace is utterly impossible. Trust in our own works in any degree effectually shuts us out from all hope of salvation by grace; and so it frustrates the grace of God.

This is another form of this crime, that when men preach up human doings, sufferings, feelings, or emotions as the ground of salvation, *they take off the sinner from confidence in Christ,* for as long as a man can maintain any hope in himself he will never look to the Redeemer. We may preach for ever and ever, but as long as there remains latent in any one bosom a hope that he can effectually clear himself from sin and win the favour of God by his own works, that man will never accept the proclamation of free pardon through the blood of Christ. We know that we cannot frustrate the grace of God: it will have its way, and the eternal purpose shall be fulfilled; but as the tendency of all teaching which mixes up works with grace is to take men off from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, its tendency is to frustrate the grace of God, and every act is to be judged by its tendency even if the Lord's divine power prevents its working out its natural result. No man can lay another foundation than that which is laid, but inasmuch as they try to do so they are guilty of despising the foundation of God as much as those builders of the olden time who rejected the stone which God had chosen to be the head of the corner. May the grace of God keep us from such a crime as this, lest the blood of other men's souls should crimson our garments.

This hoping to be saved by our own righteousness *robs God of his glory.* It as good as says, "We want no grace; we need no free favour." It reads of the new covenant which infinite love has made, but by clinging to the old covenant it puts dishonour upon it. In its heart it murmurs, "What need of this covenant of grace? The covenant of works answers every purpose for us." It reads of the great gift of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, and it does despite thereto

by the secret thought that human doings are as good as the life and death of the Son of God. It cries, "We will not have this man to save us." A self-righteous hope casts a slur upon the glory of God, since it is clear that if a man could be saved by his own works, he would naturally have the honour of it; but if a man be saved by the free grace of God, then God is glorified. Woe unto those who teach a doctrine which would pluck the crown royal from the head of our sovereign Lord and disgrace the throne of his glory. God help us to be clear of this rank offence against high heaven.

I grow warm upon such a subject as this, for my indignation rises against that which does dishonour to my Lord, and frustrates his grace. This is a sin so gross that even the heathen cannot commit it. They have never heard of the grace of God, and therefore they cannot put a slight upon it: when they perish it will be with a far lighter doom than those who have been told that God is gracious and ready to pardon, and yet turn on their heel and wickedly boast of innocence, and pretend to be clean in the sight of God. This is a sin which devils cannot commit. With all the obstinacy of their rebellion, they can never reach to this. They have never had the sweet notes of free grace and dying love ringing in their ears, and therefore they have never refused the heavenly invitation. What has never been presented to their acceptance cannot be the object of their rejection. Thus, then, my hearer, if you should fall into this deep ditch you will sink lower than the heathen, lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, and lower than the devil himself. Wake up, I pray, and do not dare to frustrate the grace of God.

The second great crime which self-justification commits is *making Christ to be dead in vain*. This is plain enough. If salvation can be by the works of the law, why did our Lord Jesus die to save us? O, thou bleeding Lamb of God, thine incarnation is a marvel, but thy death upon the accursed tree is such a miracle of mercy as fills all heaven with astonishment. Will any dare to say that thy death, O incarnate God, was a superfluity, a wanton waste of suffering? Do they dare think thee a generous but unwise enthusiast whose death was needless? Can there be any who think thy cross a vain thing? Yes, thousands virtually do this, and, in fact, all do so who make it out that men might have been saved in some other way, or may now be saved by their own willings and doings.

They who say that the death of Christ goes only part of the way, but that man must do something in order to merit eternal life,—these, I say, make this death of Christ to be only partially effective, and, in yet clearer terms, ineffectual in and of itself. If it be even hinted that the blood of Jesus is not price enough till man adds his silver or his gold, then his blood is not our redemption at all, and Christ is no Redeemer! If it be taught that our Lord's bearing of sin for us did not make a perfect atonement, and that it is ineffectual till we either do or suffer something to complete it, then in the supplemental work lies the real virtue, and Christ's work is in itself insufficient. His death cry of "It is finished," must have been all a mistake, if still it is not finished; and if a believer in Christ is not completely saved by what Christ has done, but must do something himself to complete it, then salvation was not finished, and Saviour's work remains imperfect till we, poor sinners, lend a hand

to make up for his deficiencies. What blasphemy lies in such a supposition! Christ on Calvary made a needless, and a useless offering of himself if any man among you can be saved by the works of the law.

This spirit also rejects the covenant which was sealed with Christ's death. For if we can be saved by the old covenant of works, then the new covenant was not required. In God's wisdom the new covenant was brought in because the first had grown old, and was void by transgression, but if it be not void, then the new covenant is an idle innovation, and the sacrifice of Jesus ratified a foolish transaction. I loathe the words while I pronounce them. No one ever was saved under the covenant of works, nor ever will be, and the new covenant is introduced for that reason; but if there be salvation by the first, then what need was there of the second? Self-righteousness, as far as it can, disannuls the covenant, breaks its seal, and does despite to the blood of Jesus Christ which is the substance, the certificate, and the seal of that covenant. If you hold that a man can be saved by his own good works, you pour contempt upon the testament of love which the death of Jesus has put in force, for there is no need to receive as a legacy of love that which can be earned as the wage of work.

O sirs, this is a sin against each person of the sacred Trinity. It is a sin against the Father. How could he be wise and good, and yet give his only Son to die on yonder tree in anguish, if man's salvation could be wrought by some other means? It is a sin against the Son of God: you dare to say that our redemption price could have been paid somehow else, and that therefore his death was not absolutely needful for the redemption of the world; or if needful, yet not effectual, for it requires something to be added to it before it can effect its purpose. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and beware how you sin against him, for such sins are fatal. The Holy Ghost bears witness to the glorious perfection and unconquerable power of the Redeemer's work, and woe to those who reject that witness. He has come into the world on purpose that he may convince men of the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ: and therefore if we think that we can be saved apart from Christ we do despite to the Spirit of his grace.

The doctrine of salvation by works is a sin against all the fallen sons of Adam, for if men cannot be saved except by their own works what hope is left for any transgressor? You shut the gates of mercy on mankind; you condemn the guilty to die without the possibility of remission. You deny all hope of welcome to the returning prodigal, all prospect of Paradise to the dying thief. If heaven be by works, thousands of us will never see its gates. I know that I never shall. You fine fellows may rejoice in your prospects, but what is to become of us? You ruin us all by your boastful scheme.

Nor is this all. It is a sin against the saints, for none of them have any other hope except in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Remove the doctrine of the atoning blood, and you have taken all away; our foundation is gone. If you speak thus you offend the whole generation of godly men. I go further: work-mongering is a sin against the perfect ones above. The doctrine of salvation by works would silence the hallelujahs of heaven. Hush, ye choristers, what meaning is there in your song? You are chanting, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us

from our sins in his own blood." But why sing ye so? If salvation be by works, your ascriptions of praise are empty flatteries. You ought to sing, "Unto ourselves who kept our garments clean, to us be glory for ever and ever"; or at least "unto ourselves whose acts made the Redeemer's work effectual be a full share of praise." But a self-lauding note was never heard in heaven, and therefore we feel sure that the doctrine of self-justification is not of God. I charge you, renounce it as the foe of God and man. This proud system is a sin of deepest dye against the Well-beloved. I cannot endure to think of the insult which it puts upon our dying Lord. If you have made Christ to live in vain, that is bad enough; but to represent him as having *died* in vain! What shall be said of this? That Christ came to earth for nothing is a statement most horrible; but that he became obedient to the death of the cross without result is profanity at its worst.

II. I will say no more concerning the nature of these sins, but in the second place proceed to the solemn fact that THESE TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE COMMITTED BY MANY PEOPLE. I am afraid they are committed by some who hear me this day. Let everyone search himself and see if these accursed things be not hidden in his heart, and if they be, let him cry unto God for deliverance from them.

Assuredly these crimes are chargeable on *those who trifle with the gospel.* Here is the greatest discovery that was ever made, the most wonderful piece of knowledge that ever was revealed, and yet you do not think it worth a thought. You come now and then to hear a sermon, but you hear without heart; you read the Scriptures occasionally, but you do not search them as for hid treasure. It is not your first object in life thoroughly to understand and heartily to receive the gospel which God has proclaimed: yet such ought to be the case. What, my friend, does your indifference say that the grace of God is of no great value in your esteem? You do not think it worth the trouble of prayer, of Bible-reading, and attention. The death of Christ is nothing to you—a very beautiful fact, no doubt; you know the story well, but you do not care enough about it to wish to be a partaker in its benefits. His blood may have power to cleanse from sin, but you do not want remission; his death may be the life of men, but you do not long to live by him. To be saved by the atoning blood does not strike you as being half so important as to carry on your business at a profit and acquire a fortune for your family. By thus trifling with these precious things you do, as far as you can, frustrate the grace of God and make Christ to die in vain.

Another set of people who do this are *those who have no sense of guilt.* Perhaps they are naturally amiable, civil, honest, and generous people, and they think that these natural virtues are all that is needed. We have many such, in whom there is much that is lovely, but the one thing needful is lacking. They are not conscious that they ever did anything very wrong, they think themselves certainly as good as others, and in some respects rather better. It is highly probable that you are as good as others, and even better than others, but still do you not see, my dear friend, if I am addressing one such person, that, if you are so good that you are to be saved by your goodness, you put the grace of God out of court, and make it vain? The whole have no need of the physician, only

they that are sick require his skill, and therefore it was needless that Christ should die for such as you, because you, in your own opinion, had done nothing worthy of death. You claim that you have done nothing very bad; and yet there is one thing in which you have grievously transgressed, and I beg you not to be angry when I charge you with it. You are very bad, because you are so proud as to think yourself righteous, though God hath said that there is none righteous, no, not one. You tell your God that he is a liar. His Word accuses you, and his law condemns you; but you will not believe him, and actually boast of having a righteousness of your own. This is high presumption and arrogant pride, and may the Lord purge you from it. Will you lay this to heart, and remember that if you have never been guilty of anything else this is sin enough to make you mourn before the Lord day and night? You have as far as you could by your proud opinion of yourself made void the grace of God, and declared that Christ died in vain. Hide your face for shame, and entreat for mercy for this glaring offence.

Another sort of people may fancy that they shall escape, but we must now come home to them. *Those who despair* will often cry, "I know I cannot be saved except by grace, for I am such a great sinner; but, alas, I am too great a sinner to be saved at all. I am too black for Christ to wash out my sins." Ah, my dear friend, though you know it not, you are making void the grace of God, by denying its power and limiting its might. You doubt the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the power of the Father's grace. What! The grace of God, is not that able to save? Is not the Father of our Lord Jesus able to forgive sin? We joyfully sing,—

> "Who is a pardoning God like thee?
> Or who hath grace so rich and free?"

And you say he cannot forgive you, and this in the teeth of his many promises of mercy. He says, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You say that this is not true. Thus you frustrate the grace of God, and you make out that Christ died in vain, at least for you, for you say that he cannot cleanse you. Oh say not so: let not thine unbelief give the lie to God. Oh, believe that he is able to save even thee, and freely, at this very moment, to put all thy sin away, and to accept thee in Christ Jesus. Take heed of despondency, for if thou dost not trust him thou wilt make void his grace.

And those, I think, commit this sin in a large measure, *who make a mingle-mangle of the gospel.* I mean this: when we preach the gospel we have only to say, "Sinners, you are guilty; you never can be anything else but guilty in and of yourselves: if that sin of yours be pardoned it must be through an act of sovereign grace, and not because of anything in you, or that can be done by you. Grace must be given to you because Jesus died, and for no other reason; and the way by which you can have that grace is simply by trusting Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ you shall obtain full forgiveness." This is pure

gospel. If the man turns round and enquires, "How am I warranted to believe in Christ?" If I tell him that he is warranted to believe in Christ because he feels a law-work within, or because he has holy desires, I have made a mess of it: I have put something of the man into the question and marred the glory of grace. My answer is, "Man, your right to believe in Christ lies not in what you are or feel, but in God's command to you to believe, and in God's promise which is made to every creature under heaven, that whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall be saved." This is our commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." If you are a creature, we preach that gospel to you. Trust Christ and you are saved. Not because you are a sensible sinner, or a penitent sinner, or anything else, but simply because God, of his free grace, with no consideration rendered to him on your part, but gratis and for nothing, freely forgives all your debts for the sake of Jesus Christ. Now I have not mangled the gospel; there it is, with nothing of the creature about it but the man's faith, and even that is the Holy Spirit's gift. Those who mingle their "ifs," and "buts," and insist upon it "you must do this, and feel that, before you may accept Christ," frustrate the grace of God in a measure, and do damage to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And so, once more, do *those also who apostatise.* Do I speak to any here who were once professors of religion, who once used to offer prayer in the assembly, who once walked as saints, but now have gone back, breaking the Sabbath, forsaking the house of God, and living in sin? You, my friend, say by your course of life,—"I had the grace of God, but I do not care about it: it is worth nothing. I have rejected it, I have given it up: I have made it void: I have gone back to the world." You do as good as say, "I did once trust in Jesus Christ, but he is not worth trusting." You have denied him, you have sold your Lord and Master. I will not now go into the question as to whether you ever were sincere, though I believe you never were, but on your own showing such is your case. Take heed lest these two terrible crimes should rest upon you, that you do frustrate the grace of God, and make Christ to be dead in vain.

III. On my third point I shall carry with me the deep convictions, and the joyful confidences, of all true believers. It is this, that NO TRUE BELIEVER WILL BE GUILTY OF THESE CRIMES. In his very soul he loathes these infamous sins.

First of all, *no believer in Christ can bear to think of the frustrating of the grace of God or the making of it void.* Come, now, honest hearts, I speak to you. Do you trust in grace alone, or do you in some measure rest in yourselves? Do you even in a small degree depend upon your own feelings, your own faithfulness, your own repentance? I know you abhor the very thought. You have not even the shadow of a hope nor the semblance of a confidence in anything you ever were, or ever can be, or ever hope to be. You fling this away as a foul rag full of contagion, which you would hurl out of the universe if you could. I do avow that though I have preached the gospel with all my heart, and glory in it, yet I cast my preachings away as dross and dung if I think of them as a ground of reliance: and though I have brought many souls to Christ, blessed be his name, I never dare for one moment

put the slightest confidence in that fact as to my own salvation, for I know that I, after having preached to others, may yet be a castaway. I cannot rest in a successful ministry, or an edified church, but I repose alone in my Redeemer. What I say of myself I know that each one of you will say for himself. Your almsgivings, your prayers, your tears, your suffering persecution, your gifts to the church, your earnest work in the Sunday-school or elsewhere—did you ever think of putting these side by side with the blood of Christ as your hope? No, you never dreamed of it; I am sure you never did, and the mention of it is utterly loathsome to you: is it not? Grace, grace, grace is your sole hope.

Moreover, you have not only renounced all confidence in works, but you renounce it this day more heartily than ever you did. The older you are, and the more holy you become, the less do you think of trusting in yourself. The more we grow in grace the more we grow in love with grace; the more we search into our hearts, and the more we know of the holy law of God, the deeper is our sense of unworthiness, and consequently the higher is our delight in rich, free, unmerited mercy, the free gift of the royal heart of God. Tell me, does not your heart leap within you when you hear the doctrines of grace? I know there are some who never felt themselves to be sinners, who shift about as if they were sitting on thorns when I am preaching grace and nothing else but grace; but it is not so with you who are resting in Christ. "Oh, no," you say, "ring that bell again, sir! Ring that bell again; there is no music like it. Touch that string again, it is our favourite note." When you get down in spirits and depressed what sort of book do you like to read? Is it not a book about the grace of God? What do you turn to in the Scriptures? Do you not turn to the promises made to the guilty, the ungodly, the sinner, and do you not find that only in the grace of God, and only at the cross foot is there any rest for you? I know it is so. Then you can rise up and say with Paul, "I do not frustrate the grace of God. Some may, if they like, but God forbid that I should ever make it void, for it is all my salvation and all my desire."

The true believer is also free from the second crime: *he does not make Christ to be dead in vain.* No, no, no, he trusts in the death of Christ; he puts his sole and entire reliance upon the great Substitute who loved and lived and died for him. He does not dare to associate with the bleeding sacrifice, his poor bleeding heart, or his prayers, or his sanctification, or anything else. "None but Christ, none but Christ," is his soul's cry. He detests every proposal to mix anything of ceremony or of legal action with the finished work of Jesus Christ. The longer we live, I trust, dear brethren, the more we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are struck with admiration at the wisdom of the way by which a substitute was introduced,—that God might smite sin and yet spare the sinner; we are lost in admiration at the matchless love of God, that he spared not his own Son; we are filled with reverent adoration at the love of Christ, that when he knew the price of pardon was his blood his pity ne'er withdrew. What is more, we not only joy in Christ, but we feel an increasing oneness with him. We did not know it at first, but we know it now, that we were crucified with him, that we were buried with him, that we rose again with him. We are not going to have Moses for a ruler, or Aaron for

a priest, for Jesus is both king and priest to us. Christ is in us, and we are in Christ, and we are complete in him, and nothing can be tolerated as an aid to the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are one with him, and being one with him we realize more every day that he did not die in vain. His death *has* bought us real life: his death *has* already set us free from the bondage of sin, and *has* even now brought us deliverance from the fear of eternal wrath. His death has bought us life eternal, has bought us sonship and all the blessings that go with it, which the Fatherhood of God takes care to bestow; the death of Christ has shut the gates of hell for us, and opened the gates of heaven; the death of Christ has wrought for us mercies, not visionary or imaginary, but real and true, which this very day we do enjoy, and so we are in no danger of thinking that Christ died in vain.

It is our joy to hold two great principles which I will leave with you, hoping that you will suck marrow and fatness out of them. These are the two principles. The grace of God cannot be frustrated, and Jesus Christ died not in vain. These two principles I think lie at the bottom of all sound doctrine. *The grace of God cannot be frustrated after all.* Its eternal purpose will be fulfilled, its sacrifice and seal shall be effectual: the chosen ones of grace shall be brought to glory. There shall be no failures as to God's plan in any point whatever: at the last when all shall be summed up it shall be seen that grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, and the topstone shall be brought out with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And as grace cannot be frustrated, so *Christ did not die in vain.* Some seem to think that there were purposes in Christ's heart which will never be accomplished. We have not so learned Christ. What he died to do shall be done; those he bought he will have; those he redeemed shall be free; there shall be no failure of reward for Christ's wondrous work: he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. On these two principles I throw back my soul to rest. Believing in his grace that grace shall never fail me. "My grace is sufficient for thee," saith the Lord, and so shall it be. Believing in Jesus Christ, his death must save me. It cannot be, O Calvary, that thou shouldst fail; O Gethsemane, that thy bloody sweat should be in vain. Through divine grace, resting in our Saviour's precious blood, we must be saved. Joy and rejoice with me, and go your way to tell it out to others. God bless you in so doing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Gal. i. 11; ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—178, 647, 554.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL KINGDOM, AND HOW IT COMETH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."—Psalms ii. 8, 9.

OBSERVE, dear friends, the wonderful contrast between the violent excitement of the enemies of the Lord, and the sublime serenity of God himself. He is not disturbed though the heathen so furiously rage, and their kings and mighty ones set themselves in battle array. He smiles at them: he hath them in derision. You and I are often downcast and depressed, and our forebodings are dark and dismal, but God sits in his eternal peacefulness, and serenely overrules tumult and rebellion. The Lord reigneth, and his throne is not moved, nor his rest broken, whatever may be the noise and turmoil down below.

Notice the sublimity of this divine calm. While the heathen and their princes are plotting and planning how to break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from them, he has already defeated their devices, and he says to them, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." "You will not have my Son to reign over you, but nevertheless he reigns. While you have been raging I have crowned him. Your imaginations are indeed vain, for I have forestalled you, and established him upon his throne. Hear him as he proclaims my decree, and asserts his filial sovereignty." God is ever beforehand with his adversaries: they find their scheming frustrated, and their craft baffled, even before they have begun to execute their plans. By God's decree the ever blessed Son of the Highest is placed in power, and exalted to his throne. The rulers cannot snatch from his hand the sceptre, nor dash from his head the crown: Jesus reigns and must reign till all enemies are put under his feet. God has set him firmly upon Zion's sacred hill, and raging nations cannot cast him down: the very idea of their so doing excites the derision of Jehovah, he disturbs not his great soul because of their blustering. As if it were a banquet rather than a conflict, the Lord God, as himself a king, speaks to the King's Son, even to his Anointed on his right hand, and having owned his royal rank, confers upon him the highest honours. At great feasts many a monarch has been known to say to his favourite, "Ask what I shall give thee,

and nothing shall be denied thee this day." Even thus doth the great Father say to his glorious Son the Prince of Peace, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen, thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, thy possession." He bids him open his mouth wide, and request a boundless dominion. He will give him distant nations, yea, and the whole round earth to be his kingdom. There is an air of regal festivity and peaceful joy about all this which strangely contrasts with the uproar of the adversaries. Brethren, I wish we could enter in some measure into this sublime quiet. We may well be confident since God is so. If the Captain be assured of victory it behoves the common soldier to be bravely hopeful. The battle is the Lord's, and since he is the Lord God omnipotent, fear about the issue of the conflict is foolish and wicked. All events are in his hand—his hand who can dash whole worlds to dust, or make them when it pleases him. What can stand against the almighty will? Who shall say unto Jehovah, "What doest thou?" In this eternal all-sufficiency is our rest, and we may therefore cease from anxiety. Stand thou still, my weary brother, and see the salvation of God. Put not forth thy timorous hand to stay the trembling ark, but know that Jehovah can protect his own. Lay thy Martha cares aside: sit at thy Saviour's feet, and listen to his voice. He will tell thee that God reigneth yet, and that his anointed shall reign also. Things are not as they seem: all is well when all looks ill. If the heavens are clouded the sun is not put out: if the evening hath darkened, even to midnight, yet the morning cometh: to the moment shall it break, nor can all the powers of darkness hinder the dawning day. Jehovah's fixed decrees remain engraved as in eternal brass, nor can the craft of hell efface a single line nor stay the execution of a single purpose. Despite all opposition the sacred purpose will blossom into the actual providence, and the providence will ripen into salvation. God's plan will be carried out without failure in any point, and there is no cause for alarm.

If we were more calm and restful we should do our work better, for do we not gather both wisdom and courage when we abide in quietness and confidence? The joy of the Lord is the strength of his saints. The assurance of faith, if we were filled with it, would make us go forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Alas, our short-sighted fretfulness, our anxious mistrust, and our timorous suspicion cause us needless distress, weaken us for service, and expose us to the assaults of our adversaries. Without the preparation of the gospel of peace our feet are unshod, and we are unfit for the heavenly pilgrimage. Grovelling here below among the troubles of the hour, the most of Christians are a timorous folk, and act like the tribe of Reuben in the day of Barak's battle, to whom Deborah cried, "Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks?" O ye who lie among the pots, and do servile work in abject fear, arise to a braver spirit. Up ye to the everlasting hills and breathe a purer air: gird yourselves with the belt of confidence in God, and you shall be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." May God grant that the subject of this morning may help us out of the depressing influences which surround us, and raise us into fellowship with the calm in which Jehovah sits smiling, and out of which he saith, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

Our text suggests to us this morning, first, that *the kingdoms of the earth, and the earth itself, are Christ's inheritance,*—"I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Leave out those little words which the translators have inserted, for they but feebly help the sense. "I will give the heathen, thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, thy possession." When we have dwelt upon that we shall then notice *that this is to be had for the asking:* "Ask of me, and I shall give." Thirdly, we shall note that *the power by which the dominion shall be gained is altogether of God:* "I shall give." And fourthly, we shall remark that in order to complete the conquest of the world *all existing and all future confederacies against the Lord, and against his Christ, shall be utterly destroyed:* "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

I. For our comfort let us notice the teaching of the text that THE LORD WILL GIVE TO CHRIST THE HEATHEN AS HIS INHERITANCE AND THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH AS HIS POSSESSION. This I take to refer to our Lord as man. Already as God the kingdom of the divine Son ruleth over all. There never was a limit to the reign of Jesus as God, not even when he was hanging on the cross; he was the everlasting Father even when he was "the child born, the Son given."

It is in his wondrous nature as God-man Mediator that these words may be understood, for so the apostle Paul evidently interpreted them. The mysterious sentence, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," may refer to the deep and secret truth of the eternal filiation of our Lord, whatever that may be; but Paul quotes it in the thirteenth Acts as referring to his resurrection. Here are his words, "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It is in resurrection power that Christ comes forth, and God gives to him to have dominion over the earth and all that is upon it. Because he liveth and was dead he hath the keys of hell and of death. By virtue of his humiliation he reigns. For the suffering of death he is crowned with glory and honour. The heavenly host proclaim his worthiness to take the book and open its seven seals, singing, "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." He descended that he might ascend above all things and fill all things; he laid aside his glory that he might be crowned with this new glory and honour, and might have all things put under his feet as the Son of man. We speak therefore of Jesus Christ the risen One, who once died, but has now risen from the tomb, and quitted this earth for the splendours of the New Jerusalem.

Our conviction is that this same Jesus is to reign over the whole world. I shall not enter into the question whether this will be accomplished before his second advent, or will be the result of his glorious appearing. I should not like to assert that this consummation will be reached before his advent, for that might seem to militate against our duty to watch for his coming, which may be at any moment: on the other hand, I would not venture to assert that the gospel cannot be universally victorious before his coming, because I perceive that this opinion is a pillow for many an idle head, and is ruinous to the

hopeful spirit of missionary enterprise. It is enough for me that a wide dominion will be given to our Lord at some time or other, and that assuredly his kingdom shall embrace all the nations of mankind. The whole earth shall yet be filled with his glory; the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head and clear the world of his slimy trail.

For the next few minutes you will be so good as to keep your Bibles going, for the appeal must be to God's own word. I gather that the kingdom of Christ is to be so extensive as to comprehend all mankind, first, because, of the exceeding breadth of the prophecy of it which was made to Abraham in Genesis xii. 3. That is an old covenant promise which refers to Abraham as the father of the faithful, and to his one great seed, even Jesus, the promised Messiah. Here are the far-reaching words,—"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Assuredly they are not as yet all blessed in him to such an extent as to exhaust the divine meaning. When God in covenant promises a blessing it is no light thing, and therefore I am sure that this grand covenant blessing of the nations is something more than a name. Though I doubt not that the whole earth is to some extent the better because of the coming of Christ, and his peace-making death, and the spread of his pure faith, yet I cannot believe that multitudes who live and die in the thick darkness of ignorance and idolatry are really blessed in Christ in such a sense as to make it a covenant blessing. How much are Tartary, China, and Thibet blessed by the gospel? There must be something better yet for all the families of the earth than anything they have hitherto received. All the families of the earth shall yet know that the promised seed hath lived and died for them, and some of every kindred and tongue shall find salvation in him.

Jacob, too, when he spake concerning the Shiloh in Genesis xlix. 10, said, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." By the people is not meant the seed of Israel, but the nations, or the Gentiles; so the Septuagint and the Syraic understand it, and so indeed it is. Jesus, our great Shiloh, sets up the standard, and his chosen rally around in ever growing numbers till the dispersed of Babel shall find in him a new centre, and a pure language shall be given to them in him. The words mean not "gathering" only, but a willing obedience, the fruit of faith and the expression of piety. To this is parallel the word of Paul in Romans xv. 12: "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." It is evident, then, that the nations shall come to trust in the Messiah, and thus shall they find life eternal.

Moses, too, in Deuteronomy xxxii. 21, to which passage Paul in the Romans so especially refers, speaks of the heathen nations when he says, "I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Truly this is fulfilled in these days when the gospel line hath gone out throughout all the earth, and its words unto the ends of the earth; and this our own foolish nation, this once barbarous people which seemed shut out from God, worshipping idols with all the cruel rites of the Druids, has been brought into covenant with God and made to rejoice in him. Degraded heathen in all lands have become believers, and so shall all nations be brought believingly to Jesus' feet, that Israel may be

angered and provoked to jealousy until her time shall come, when she shall look on him whom she hath pierced, and shall mourn for him, and turn to him with full purpose of heart.

When we reach the Psalms we come into the clear light of prophecy concerning the kingdom of our blessed Master. Our text stands first, and is sufficient in itself: the heathen are to be his inheritance, and the utmost bounds of the world are to be his possession. Turn to that famous passion psalm, the twenty-second. Its pathos with regard to the griefs of the crucified One is deep and touching. You see him hanging on the tree, a gazing-stock to scoffers, with his tongue cleaving to his jaws, and his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels; and yet ere the psalm closes the plaintive gives place to the triumphant, and the dying One cries, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul." On the cross this prospect cheered our dying Master's heart, that the kingdom should be the Lord's, and that all the kindreds of the nations should come and worship before him; let it cheer us also. Do you think that the crucified Lord will be disappointed of the end for which he died? Will you venture to assert that a single drop of his blood was shed for nought? Rest assured that he shall see of the travail of his soul, till even his great loving heart shall be content. God hath said it, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death;" and be ye calmly confident that the word of the Lord will stand.

Turn your Bibles over till you reach Psalm lxvi., and the fourth verse, and there you come upon another word of comfort: "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name." This sentence is not merely the passionate hope of an enthusiastic worshipper, but a voice inspired of the Holy Spirit, plainly declaring that all peoples shall adore their Maker with hearty praise and joyful song.

How glowing is the language of Psalm lxxii. Can we expect too great things for our king when we remember the gracious words beginning at the eighth verse: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." Read on at verse seventeen: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." These terms include the most barbarous tribes that exist, and they specially mention nations which boast that they were never conquered: such as the untamed rovers of the wilderness, who centuries ago laughed at the Roman power. The legions which subdued all other peoples could not conquer the sons of Ishmael; fleet of foot as a hart, swift as a young roe, they fled over the desert sands, out of reach of the pursuer; yet these shall bow before our Lord, and joyfully pay him homage. He will sway

his sceptre where sceptre was never owned before; he shall set up a throne where all other authority has been laughed to scorn.

You will not be wearied if I ask you to look at Psalm lxxxvi. verse 9. There you will find it written, "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name." It is not to be mere outside worship that shall be paid, for the nations are to glorify his name, which is a high form of praise. All nations are to glorify the Lord, and this they have not done as yet.

We expected to find, and we are not disappointed in our expectation, that Isaiah would be sure to speak concerning these things. I would rather you heard the word of God by far than my word, and therefore we will keep to our reading. It will bring you encouragement and heart-cheer to know what prophets said in the olden time, when only Israel had the light. They did not think the light would be confined to the one peculiar people, but they expected that on the nations which sat in darkness light would break, and they also would seek the Lord. Turn to Isaiah and read. See what he says in his second chapter. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." I can but give samples. The passages abound all through Isaiah in which there is the intimation of the general spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Turn to Isaiah xlix. 6: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy one of Israel, and he shall choose thee." (v. 12.) "Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim." "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee."

Nor is Isaiah alone in such prophecies as these. I cannot detain you by reading what Ezekiel saith concerning the ever deepening waters which shall carry life to all lands; and I will only mention one word of Jeremiah, because it so peculiarly proves that the homage paid by heathen nations to our Lord will be that of their hearts; and that the reign of Christ, whatever it may be else, will certainly be a spiritual reign. Jeremiah iii. 17: "They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart." Christ will work a heart-change when he

shall win the nations to allegiance, and this shall lead to a manifest change of life,—"neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."

Daniel, that John of the Old Testament, of course saw more clearly than any the coming kingdom of the Anointed One. What doth he say in chapter vii. 18? "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Can anything be more positive than this last word?

Look how the idols are to be destroyed according to the prophet Zephaniah (ii. 11): "The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." Zechariah says to the same effect (ix. 10): "He shall speak peace unto the heathen, and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." (xiv. 2) "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one."

Lest I should weary you, I forbear to quote any more. To me it is evident beyond all contradiction that according to the whole run of Scripture the kingdom of Christ is to extend over all parts of the earth, and over all races and conditions of men, and therefore I charge you never despair for the grand old cause. An infidel notion is abroad that these different religions have sprung up at different times as developments of the religious instinct, and that they may all profitably exist side by side with ours. It is admitted that the religion of Christ is excellent, and that it deserves a large following, but still other religions have their advantages and must not be despised: nay, something better than the gospel of Christ may yet be discovered. This is the current talk in certain circles, and we would at once express our horror at it. Jesus is not to share a divided throne. Cast ye with abhorence from your souls every such blasphemous thought. Jesus must reign till all enemies are put under his feet, and to him all rivals are enemies. If Jesus be King he is the only Potentate. Christians are enlisted under a banner which does not brook another standard side by side with it, they serve a prince who will not share dominion with others, who will not submit that even a province shall be rent away from his government. He shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! Like a burst of thunder let all hearts that love him say, Amen.

II. It appears from our text that THIS UNIVERSAL DOMINION IS TO BE ASKED FOR. Thus saith the Father to his glorious Son, "Ask of me, and I will give thee." Beloved, Jesus fails not to ask. We do not doubt that he responds to the Father's invitation, and asks for his inheritance. This is the way in which the psalm before us touches upon the priestly character of Christ as combined with his kingly office. He ever liveth to intercede, and a part of his daily intercession is to ask that the heathen may be his inheritance. Now, beloved, this is a lesson to us.

We belong to Christ; we are members of that body of which he is the mystical Head, and it is ours to act with him in his life-work: as he asks, we are to ask with him. As Jesus suffers in his people, so he pleads in them. Let us cry day and night unto God for the coming and kingdom of our Lord. Let the throne of the Highest be surrounded by our perpetual prayers. Let us urge for the Lord Jesus his suit in the courts above, that the heathen may be his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession. We are so truly one with him that his sympathies and hopes are ours; his glory is our glory, his victory our victory, and therefore our supplications should naturally and spontaneously arise for him every day of our lives. Our union with him has given us a kingdom, the same kingdom as that which he claims. He himself has said it: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." As surely as he sets his Son upon his holy hill of Zion, so surely will the Lord bring us all there. Our prayers therefore should daily rise together with the pleadings of the great Intercessor himself. O Lord, thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory; let thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

This prayer is one which is commanded by God himself. About its fitness we can, therefore, have no doubt. Your Saviour taught you to say, "Thy kingdom come." In this text we find it prescribed as a prayer to the Well-beloved,—"Ask of me"; and therefore it is certainly a proper prayer for us, and we may use it without question. We are highly honoured in being permitted to present such a petition: to be allowed to pray for myself is mercy, to be permitted to pray for my fellow man is favour, but to be suffered to pray for Jesus is honour. It is written, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually," and thus there is a special honour put upon those who intercede. My Lord's prayer for me saves me; but when he bids me pray for him, he dignifies me, and I say with David, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Whatever else we forget, never from our private intercessions let us omit the prayer that the heathen may come to glorify Christ.

It is a joy to know that this prayer will be effectual to the full. It is no vain desire, no dream of a fevered brain: the infinite wisdom of God himself suggests it, for he says, "Ask, and I shall give thee." This union of precept and promise is found attached to every covenant blessing, but here it is conspicuously and distinctly stated in so many words—"Ask, and I shall give thee." Concerning this thing the promise of God is definite, we may therefore pray with full assurance. Let us avail ourselves of this plain direction every hour of our lives. O church of God, ask on Christ's behalf, and the Lord God will give him the kingdom. Heir of heaven, ask on behalf of the Elder Brother, for the Elder Brother pleads in thee, and God will hear both thee and him, and he will grant the united request. My heart is full of confidence when pleading upon this subject: what surer warrant do we want than "Ask, and I shall give thee"?

Let our prayer be wide and far-reaching. Let our desires embrace the world. Pray not for your own country only, though it needs it, and God alone knows how much; but pray for the colonies, the continent, and the far off lands. Ask that all heathens may become Christians. Plead that the whole round earth may be the Lord's: that the uttermost

parts of the earth may resound with songs in his praise. On this earth his blood has fallen; the precious drops could not be gathered up again, and so this globe remains blood-marked,—the one star upon which the Son of God poured out his life. It must be the Lord's: the sacrifice of Calvary has made it sacred to the Son of God. As our Government marks with the broad arrow those stores which belong to it, so did Christ upon the tree, when the blood fell from his hands, and feet, and side, mark, as it were, with something more full of meaning than the broad arrow, this round earth on which he bled, and it must be for ever and ever his by right of purchase and ransom. It was made subject to vanity for a little season, but it is to be redeemed from it; and when it shall be purified and beautified in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, you will not know it: for it will come forth as "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Its sister stars have long wondered at its silence, or its discord, but at the sight of its restoration to the choirs of holiness they will sing in deep delight, and chant a new song unto the Lord. With what admiration will they perceive, rising up from this once beclouded orb, a flame of unquenchable praise with pillars of perfumed smoke, the incense of eternal gratitude. Sweeter the offering of this once fallen world than that of any other sphere, for it has been redeemed, and upon it have been seen marvels of free grace and dying love such as no other world has known. Oh, may this soon come to pass; may the prayer be heard; and God be praised; but it can only be accomplished through his own appointed method, the asking of Christ, the pleading of the church. Oh, rouse thee, church, to ask. Awake thee from thine unholy lethargy, and cry day and night unto God. Cease not, but with anguish, like a woman in travail, cry aloud and spare not, until he give the risen Lord the heathen for his inheritance, and make his throne higher than the kings of the earth.

III. Thirdly, THIS DOMINION IS TO BE GAINED BY THE POWER OF GOD. Notice the text, for it is very explicit: "Ask of me, and *I shall give thee.*" The power and grace of God will be conspicuously seen in the subjugation of this world to Christ: every heart shall know that it was wrought by the power of God in answer to the prayer of Christ and his church. I believe, brethren, that the length of time spent in the accomplishment of the divine plan has much of it been occupied with getting rid of those many forms of human power which have intruded into the place of the Spirit. If you and I had been about in our Lord's day, and could have had everything managed to our hand, we should have converted Cæsar straight away by argument or by oratory; we should then have converted all his legions by every means within our reach; and, I warrant you, with Cæsar and his legions at our back we would have Christianised the world in no time: would we not? Yes, but that is not God's way at all, nor the right and effectual way to set up a spiritual kingdom. Bribes and threats are alike unlawful, eloquence and carnal reasoning are out of court, the power of divine love is the one weapon for this campaign. Long ago the prophet wrote, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The fact is that such conversions as could be brought about by physical force, or by mere mental energy, or by the prestige of rank and pomp, are not

conversions at all. The kingdom of Christ is not a kingdom of this world, else would his servants fight; it rests on a spiritual basis, and is to be advanced by spiritual means. Yet Christ's servants gradually slipped down into the notion that his kingdom was of this world, and could be upheld by human power. A Roman emperor professed to be converted, using a deep policy to settle himself upon the throne; then Christianity became the State-patronized religion: it seemed that the world was Christianized, whereas, indeed, the church was heathenized. Hence sprang the monster of a State-church, a conjunction ill-assorted, and fraught with untold ills. This incongruous thing is half human, half divine: as a theory it fascinates, as a fact it betrays; it promises to advance the truth, and is itself a negation of it. Under its influences a system of religion was fashioned, which beyond all false religions, and beyond even Atheism itself, is the greatest hindrance to the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Under its influence dark ages lowered over the world; men were not permitted to think; a Bible could scarcely be found, and a preacher of the gospel, if found, was put to death. That was the result of human power coming in with the sword in one hand and the gospel in the other, and developing its pride of ecclesiastical power into a triple crown, an Inquisition, and an infallible Pope. This parasite, this canker, this incubus of the church will be removed by the grace of God, and by his providence in due season. The kings of the earth who have loved this unchaste system will grow weary of it and destroy it. Read Revelation xvii. 16, and see how terrible her end will be. The death of the system will come from those who gave it life: the powers of earth created the system, and they will in due time destroy it.

Frequently do we meet with the idea that the world is to be converted to Christ by the spread of civilization. Now, civilization always follows the gospel, and is in a great measure the product of it; but many people put the cart before the horse, and make civilization the first cause. According to their opinion trade is to regenerate the nations, the arts are to ennoble them, and education is to purify them. Peace Societies are formed, against which I have not a word to say, but much in their favour; still, I believe the only efficient peace society is the church of God, and the best peace teaching is the love of God in Christ Jesus. The grace of God is the great instrument for uplifting the world from the depths of its ruin, and covering it with happiness and holiness. Christ's cross is the Pharos of this tempestuous sea, like the Eddystone lighthouse flinging its beams through the midnight of ignorance over the raging waters of human sin, preserving men from rock and shipwreck, piloting them into the port of peace. Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth from the tree; and as ye tell it out believe that the power to make the peoples believe it is with God the Father, and the power to bow them before Christ is in God the Holy Ghost. Saving energy lies not in learning, nor in wit, nor in eloquence, nor in anything save in the right arm of God, who will be exalted among the heathen, for he hath sworn that surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God. The might of the Omnipotent One shall work out his purposes of grace, and as for us, we will use the simple processes of prayer and faith. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee." Oh, that we could keep in perpetual motion the machinery of prayer. Pray, pray, pray,

and God will give, give, give, abundantly, and supernaturally, above all that we ask, or even think. He must do all things in the conquering work of the Lord Jesus. We cannot convert a single child, nor bring to Christ the humblest peasant, nor lead to peace the most hopeful youth; all must be done by the Spirit of God alone, and if ever nations are to be born in a day, and crowds are to come humbly to Jesus' feet, it is thine, Eternal Spirit, thine to do it. God must give the dominion, or the rebels will remain unsubdued.

IV. Thus the power of God worketh to bring about the kingdom of Christ; and THIS INVOLVES THE BREAKING UP OF ALL THE CONFEDERACIES WHICH NOW EXIST OR EVER SHALL EXIST FOR THE HINDRANCE OF THE REDEEMER'S KINGDOM.

Our text employs a figure which is very full of meaning. "He shall break them with a rod of iron." He breaks not the subject nations, nor the inherited heathen, but the kings of the earth who stood up and took counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed. Against these he will lift up his iron rod of stern justice and irresistible power. Over his own inheritance he will sway a silver sceptre of love; over his own possession he shall reign with gentleness and grace; but as for his adversaries, he will deal with them in severity, and display his power in them. How shall they stand out against him? They have formed their confederacy with great care and skill: as when men prepare clay and make it plastic for the potter's use, so have they made all things ready; they have set their design upon the wheel, and caused it to revolve in their thoughts, and with great skill they have fashioned it. Lo, there it stands finished, and fair to look upon. Yet at its very best it is nothing more than a potter's vessel. It may be of the purest clay, and of such exquisite workmanship that it shall enchant every man of taste, but it attaineth to be nothing more than an earthen vessel, and therefore woe unto it when the rod of iron falls upon it. Woe to all human societies and brotherhoods which are framed to resist the Lord. Mark the conflict and its end! It is brief enough. A stroke! Where is the hope of the Lord's adversary? Gone, gone, utterly gone; only a few potsherds remain. Oh for such a smiting of the apostacy of Rome! Oh for one touch of the iron rod upon the imposture of Mohammed! Oh, for a blow at Buddhism, and a back stroke at the superstition of Brahminism, and at all the idols of the heathen! Woe unto the gods of the land of Sinim in that day; a single stroke shall set the potsherds flying. Wherefore, then, should we fear, although they plot and plan; although a solemn conclave of cardinals be held, though the Pope fulminate his bulls, though the Sultan ordain that every convert to Christianity shall be put to death, though still the scoffers revile at Christianity, and say that it spreads not as once it did? A speedy answer shall confound them, or if not speedy yet the stroke shall be sure. Our King waits a while. He hath leisure. Haste belongs to weakness; his strength moves calmly. Only let him be aroused and you shall see how quick are his paces. He redeemed the world in a few short hours upon the tree, and I warrant you that when he getteth that iron rod once fairly to work he will not need many days to ease him of his adversaries, and make a clean sweep of all that set themselves against him. If you want to see how it will be done, read, I

pray you, Daniel ii. 31 :—"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." It was a strange conglomeration: all the metallic empires are set forth as combined in one image; which image is the embodied idea of monarchical power, which has fascinated men even to this day. The prophet goes on to say, "Thou sawest still that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." And so it is to be: the vision is being each day fulfilled. The gospel stone, which owes nothing to human strength or wisdom, is breaking the image, and scattering all opposing powers. No system, society, confederacy, or cabinet can stand which is opposed to truth and righteousness. I, even I, that am but of yesterday, and know nothing, have seen one of the mightiest of empires of modern times melt away on a sudden as the rime of the morning in the heat of the sun. I have seen monarchs driven out of their tyrannies by the powers of a single man, and a free nation born as in an hour. I have seen states which fought to hold the negro in perpetual captivity subdued by those whom they despised, while the slave has been set free. I have seen nations chastened under evil governments, and revived when the yoke has been broken, and they have returned to the way of righteousness and peace. He who lives longest shall see most of this. Evil is short-lived. Truth shall yet rise above all. The Lord saith, overturn, overturn till he shall come whose right it is, and God shall give it him. Woe unto those that stand against the Lord and his anointed, for they shall not prosper. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms ii. and Acts xiii. 13—41.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—72, 953, 427.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SENTENCE OF DEATH, THE DEATH OF SELF-TRUST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 2ND, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."—2 Corinthians i. 9.

WE are justified, dear friends, in speaking about our own experience when the mention of it will be for the benefit of others. Especially is this the case with leaders in the church such as Paul; for their experience is rich and deep, and the rehearsal of it comes with great weight, and is peculiarly valuable. We are all the better when we are distressed for discovering that such an one as Paul was also subject to heaviness: we feel safe in following the line of conduct which was marked out by the great apostle, and we are hopeful that if he came out of his troubles which were so great, we may also be delivered out of ours which are comparatively so little. These footprints on the sand of time help us to take heart. By tracing the footsteps of the flock, we are helped to return to the fold and to the Shepherd. It would have been a great calamity if such men as David and Paul had, through a fear of seeming egotistical, withheld from us a sight of their inner selves. God has been pleased to fill a large part of the Bible with biographies and histories of human actions, in order that we who are men ourselves may learn from them. Where a biography concerns mainly the inner rather than the outer life, as in the Psalms and in Paul's epistles, we are all the more strengthened, instructed, directed, and comforted, for it is in the inner life that we are most perplexed, and most in danger of going astray. God grant us grace to make good use of the treasure of experience which is stored up for us in his word! How rich, how varied, how admirably selected! If one man can learn by the life of another, surely we ought to learn from such memorable lives as those immortalized in the Scriptures. Especially may we see ourselves as in a mirror while we steadily look into the heart of Paul.

As to our own experience of trial and of delivering mercy, it is sent for our good, and we should endeavour to profit to the utmost by it: but it was never intended that it should end with our private and personal benefit. In the kingdom of God no man liveth unto himself.

We are bound to comfort others by the comfort wherewith the Lor hath comforted us. We are under solemn obligation to seek ou mourners, and such as are in tried circumstances, that we may com municate to them the cheering testimony which we are able personall to bear to the love and faithfulness of God. Our Lord has hande out to us spiritual riches of joy that we may communicate thereof t others who are in need of consolation through great tribulation. Yo may think that you are not called upon to preach, and possibly you ma neither have the ability nor the opportunity for such public witness bearing; but your experience is a treasure, of which you are the trustee and you are bound by the law of gratitude to make use of all yo know, all you have felt, all you have learned by personal experience fo the comforting and the upbuilding of your brethren. To be reticent i sometimes to be treacherous: you may be found unfaithful to your charg unless you endeavour to improve for the general good the dealings of th Lord with your soul. I would exhort every Christian to reflect the ligh which falls upon him. Brother, echo thy Master's voice faithfully an clearly. What the Lord has whispered to thee in thine ear in closets, tha do thou proclaim according to thine ability upon the housetops. If thou hast found honey, eat of it; yet eat not the feast alone, but call in other who can appreciate its sweetness that they may rejoice with thee. If thou hast discovered a well, drink and quench thy thirst; but hasten forth with to call the whole caravan, that every traveller may drink also. I thou hast been sick, and thou hast been healed, tell the glad news t all sick folk around thee, and let them know where they too may find cure. Peradventure thy telling of the news may have more weight with men than all our preachings: they know thee, and have seen the chang which grace has wrought in thee, and thou wilt by thine own experienc give them proof and evidence which they cannot gainsay. May the Holy Ghost help thee in this thing.

Let this stand for the preface to our sermon, and let us learn, once for all, that, as Paul used his experience for the comfort and edification o the churches, so is every believer called upon to use his experience for the benefit of his fellow Christians.

The particular experience of which Paul speaks was a certain trial, o probably series of trials, which he endured in Asia. You know how h was stoned at Lystra, and how he was followed by his malicious country nen from town to town wherever he went, that they might excite th nob against him. You recollect the uproar at Ephesus, and the constan anger to which Paul was exposed from perils of all kinds; but it mus not be forgotten that he appears to have been suffering at the same tim grievous sickness of body, and that the whole together caused very deep epression of mind. His tribulations abounded: without were fighting nd within were fears. I call to your notice the strong expressions whic e uses in the eighth verse: "We were pressed" he says. The word s such as you would use if you were speaking of a cart loaded with heaves, till it could not bear up under the weight: it is over-loaded, an hreatens to break down and fall by the way. Or the word might b ed if you spoke of a man who was weighted with too great a burden r which he was ready to fall: or perhaps, better still, if you were ng of a ship which had taken too much cargo, and sank nearly t

the water's edge, looking as if it must sink altogether through excessive pressure. Paul says that this was his condition of mind when he was in Asia,—"We were pressed." To strengthen the language he adds, "out of measure." He was pressed out of measure; he could convey no idea of the degree of pressure put upon him—it seemed to be beyond the measure of his strength. All trials, we are taught in the Scripture, are sent to us in measure, and so were Paul's, but for the time being he himself could see no limit to them, and he seemed to be quite crushed. Paul could not tell how much he was tried; he could not calculate the pressure; it was more severe than he could estimate. So great, so heavy was the burden upon his mind, that he gave up calculating its weight. Then he adds another word, "above strength," because a man may be pressed out of measure, and yet he may have such remarkable strength that he may bear up under all. The posts, and bars, and gates of Gaza must have pressed Samson, and they must have pressed him out of measure, but still not beyond his strength, because gigantic force was given to those mighty limbs of his, so that he carried readily what would have crushed another man. Paul says that the pressure put upon him was beyond his strength, he was quite unable to cope with it, and his spirits so failed him that he adds, "insomuch that we despaired even of life." He gave himself up for a dead man, for no way of escape was visible to him. Into whatsoever town he entered he was followed by the Jews; the fickle mob soon turned against him; even the converts were not always faithful. He had been stoned and beaten with rods, and men had sworn to take his life. Perils of robbers beset him in lonely places, while tumult and assault befell him in the cities. Meanwhile, the thorn in his flesh worried him, afflictions and cares of all kinds weighed upon him, and altogether his mind was bowed down under the pressure which had come upon him. What a deep bass there is in this note, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"! May we be spared so grievous a condition, or if that cannot be, may we be profited by it.

We shall in the sermon of this morning, as the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may help us, endeavour to show the reason for such affliction, and the good effect of it. First, I shall direct your attention to *the disease* mentioned in the text as one to be prevented by the sentence of death—"that we should not trust in ourselves." Secondly, we shall dwell for a little upon *the treatment*, "we had the sentence of death in ourselves;" and, thirdly, we will observe *the cure*, "we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

I. The first point is THE DISEASE—the tendency to trust in ourselves.

And we remark upon it, first, that this is *a disease to which all men are liable, for even Paul was in danger of it.* I do not say that Paul did trust in himself, but that he might have done so, and would have done so, if it had not been for the Lord's prudent dealings with him both in the matter of this great trial in Asia and in the incident of the thorn in the flesh. Where a sharp preventive is used it is clear that a strong liability exists. My brethren, I should have thought that Paul was the last man to be in danger of trusting in himself: so singularly

converted, so remarkably clear in his views of the gospel; indeed, so thorough in his faith, so intense in his zeal, so eminent in his humility was Paul that all could see that his reliance was upon grace alone. No writer that ever lived has set in so clear a light the fact that all things are of God, and that we must walk by faith and depend alone upon God if we would find salvation and eternal life: and yet you see my brethren, it was possible that the great teacher of grace should have trusted in himself. He was a man in whose life we see no sort of self-confidence. I cannot recall anything that he did or said which looks like vanity or pride. He exhibits deep humility of spirit, and great faith in God, but he evidently has no confidence in himself,—such confidence he is always disclaiming. He looks upon his own works and his own righteousness as dross and dung, that he may win Christ; and when he does speak of himself it is generally with special self-denials,—"I, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "By the grace of God," saith he, "I am what I am." It is plain then that no clearness of knowledge, no purity of intent, and no depth of experience can altogether kill in our corrupt nature the propensity to self-reliance. We are so foolish that we readily yield to the witchery which would cause us to trust in ourselves. This wide-spread folly has no respect for knowledge, age, or experience, but even feeds upon them. I have heard men say several times, and I have been ashamed as I have heard the boast, —"I am sure there is no likelihood that I should ever trust in myself; I know better." Brother, you are trusting in yourself when you say so: the subtle poison is in your veins even now. You do not know what folly you can commit. You are such a fool that even while you say, "I know my folly," you are probably even then betraying your self-conceit. What do we know? We know not what spirit we are of. We are capable of almost everything that the devil is capable of. Ay, and if the grace of God should leave us, though we had been exalted to stand like Paul and say, "I am not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles," yet should we fall, like Lucifer, and perish with pride. The silliest of the vices may overcome the wisest of saints. Trust in self is one of the most foolish of sins, though the commonness of it hides its contemptible character. When we say, "I am surprised that I should have acted so unwisely," we betray our secret pride, and confess that we thought ourselves wonderfully wise. If, my brother, you knew yourself you would not be surprised at anything that you might do. If you had a proper estimate of yourself it would rather cause you surprise that you were ever right than that you were sadly wrong, for such is the natural weakness, folly, and vanity of our deceitful hearts, that when we err even in the most foolish way, it may be said of us that we are only acting out our own selves, and we should do the same again, if not worse, were we left by the Spirit of God.

Notice, secondly, that *trusting in self is evil in all men, since it was evil in an apostle.* Paul speaks of it as a fault, which God in mercy prevented, "that we should not trust in ourselves." Why, beloved, if you or I were to trust in ourselves, we should be fit objects for ridicule and derision, for what is there in us that we can trust to? But as for Paul, [redacted] labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, laying himself out [redacted] church of God with heroic zeal, and wearing himself out with

self-denials, at first sight it seems that there was somewhat in him whereof he might glory. He walked with God, and was like his Master and Lord. He was a humble but admirable imitation of the Lord Jesus, and the mind that was in Christ was also in him: he was a noble man; take him for all in all we know not where to find his like. His was one of the most beautiful, well-balanced, forceful, and influential of human characters, and yet it would have been a most injurious thing to him to have trusted in himself in any degree. He was singularly judicious, far-seeing, and prudent, and yet he might not rely on himself. If this be so: if his revelations from God, if his deep experience, if his intense consecration, if his remarkable wisdom, if his splendid education, if his logical mind, and fervent spirit,—if all these combined could not warrant him in trusting to himself, what folly would be ours if we became self-sufficient? If a lion's strength be insufficient, what can the dogs do? If the oak trembles, how can the brambles boast? If such poor things as we are dare to be self-confident, we deserve to smart for it. May God keep us from this evil in all its disguises, whether it beguiles us in the form of boastfulness of our own righteousness, or flatters us into reliance upon our own judgment; for in any shape it is a sin against God, and a mischief to ourselves. May the God of all grace destroy it, root and branch.

We see, dear friends, in the next place, that *it must be highly injurious to trust in ourselves, since God himself interposed to prevent his dear servant from falling into it.* The Lord warded off the evil by sending Paul a great trouble when he was in Asia: thus doth our all-wise and almighty God arrange providence to prevent his servants from falling into self-trust. Depend upon it, he is doing the same for us, since we have even greater need: he is arranging all our ways and steps that we may not wander into self-conceit. Peradventure, our heavenly Father is at this present time afflicting some of you, denying you your heart's desire, or taking from you the delight of your eyes, placing you in circumstances where you are puzzled and bewildered, and do not know what to do at all; and all for this reason, that you may become sick of yourself and fond of Christ; that you may know your own folly, and may trust yourself with purpose of heart to the divine wisdom: for, rest assured, nothing can happen to you that is much worse than to trust yourselves. A man may escape from poverty, but if he falls into self-confidence he has of two evils fallen into the worse: a man may escape from a great blunder, and yet if he grows proud because he was so prudent, it may happen that his conceit of his own wisdom may be a worse evil than the mistake which he might have made. Anything is better than vain-glory and self-esteem. Self-trust before God is a monster evil which the Lord will not endure; indeed, he so abhors it that he has pronounced a curse upon it: "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." That dread word of warning emphatically applies to those who trust in themselves.

Let me, then, think most solemnly of the fact that if I am relying upon myself for acceptance with God, or for power to serve him, I am cursed. I am so, and I must be so, because trusting in myself means idolatry, and idolatry is a cursed thing. The self-truster puts himself into God's place, for God alone is to be relied upon. "Trust in *him* at

all times; ye people, pour out your heart before *him*." Trusting in yourself, you lift yourself into the throne where God alone may sit, and so you become a traitor. To trust yourself is the result of a gross falsehood, and it also imputes falsehood to the God of truth; for you do, as it were, deny that God can be believed, and you assert that you can be trusted; whereas, the Lord declares that no man is the proper object of trust. "He that trusteth in his own heart," saith he, "is a fool"; but you will not have it *so*, and therefore you give God the lie.

To trust in one's self is a piece of impertinent pride, insulting to the majesty of heaven. It is a preference of ourselves to God, so that we take our own opinion in preference to his revelation. We follow our own whim in preference to his providential direction; we, as it were, become gods *to* ourselves, and act as if we knew better than God. It is, therefore, a very high crime and misdemeanour against the majesty of heaven that we should trust in ourselves; and in whomsoever this exists, it makes a man intolerable to God.

Yet, brethren, this fourth remark must be made, that *this evil is very hard to cure;* for it seems that to prevent it in Paul it was necessary for the Great Physician to go the length of making him feel the sentence of death in himself; nothing short of this could cure the tendency. On another occasion it written, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." In the case mentioned in our text the buffeting of Satan does not seem to have sufficed; but God in his providence and love saw it necessary to cause the sentence of death to ring out its knell in the apostle's heart. A sentence of death! Can you conceive the feeling of a man who has just seen the judge put on the black cap and pronounce sentence of death? The condemned cell, the iron bars, the prison fare, the grim warders, these are nothing, but sentence of death—sentence of death! This is terrible. Paul must feel that woe. A sharp knife was needful to cut out the cancer of self-trust even from such an one as Paul. This bitter potion, bitter as gall, he must drink even to the dregs. The sentence must not only be in his ear, but be in his very self. "We had the sentence of death *in ourselves*." Nothing short of this could prevent his being polluted with self-trust; for if less suffering would have sufficed, the Lord would have spared him so dread a sorrow. As stones fall towards the earth, so do we gravitate towards self. If we are zealous, self-trust says, "What a zealous man you are, you can certainly carry everything before you." If we grow diffident, then this same pride whispers, "What a humble, modest person you are; you are not conceited or rash, you can well be trusted." If God grants us a little success in working for him we blow the trumpets that all men may be aware of it. Our Lord can scarcely send us on the commonest errand without danger of our becoming like Jack-in-office, too proud to be borne with. The Lord cannot allow us a little sweet communion with Christ but what we say, "Oh, what joy I have had. What delights at his table! What a precious season of private prayer! I am somebody." Yes, we are prone to sacrifice before this basest of idols—I say the basest of idols, for surely there is no idolatry so utterly degrading as the worship of one's self. Alas, we cannot get rid of the flavour of the Egyptian leeks and onions; self clings to us as a foul odour not to be got

out of our unclean flesh. Does the Lord teach us much of his word? Then we grow proud of knowledge. Does the Lord help us to comfort his people? Then we set up at once for something wonderful in the church. Does Christ reveal himself to us as he does not to the world? Ah, then our heads are ready to smite the stars, we are so great. God save us from this subtle malady, this spiritual leprosy. I think I may add even if nothing else but the sentence of death in ourselves can stop us from trusting in ourselves, then let even this remedy be used.

II. But now I invite you for a few minutes to look at THE TREATMENT ordained for the apostle's cure: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves," which means, first, that *he seemed to hear the verdict of death passed upon him by the conditions which surrounded him.* So continually hounded by his malicious countrymen, he felt certain that one day or other they would compass his destruction: so frequently subject to popular violence, he felt that his life was not worth a moment's purchase: and, withal, so sick in body and so depressed in spirit he felt that he might at any moment expire. The original conveys the idea, not only of a verdict from without, but of an answer of assent from within. *There was an echo in his consciousness;* an inward dread; a sort of presentiment that he was soon to die. The world threatened him with death, and he felt that one of these days the threat would be carried out, and that very speedily. And yet it was not so: he survived all the designs of the foe. My brethren, we often feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. We die before we die, and find ourselves alive to die again. Death seems certain, and yet the bird escapes even out of the fowler's hand. Just when he was about to wring its neck it flew aloft. Hark, how it sings, far above his reach. "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." A witty saying puts it, "Let us never say die till we are dead"; but then we shall most truly say we live for ever and ever. Let us postpone despair till the evil comes.

Into a low state of spirit was Paul brought: death appeared imminent, and his eye of faith gazed into the eternities, and this prevented his trusting in himself. The man who feels that he is about to die is no longer able to trust in himself. After this manner the remedy works our health. What earthly thing can help us when we are about to die? Paul needed not to say, "My riches will not help me," for he had no wealth. He had no need to say, "My lands and broad acres cannot comfort me now," for he had no foot of land to call his own: his whole estate lay in a few needles, with which he made and mended tents. His trade implements and a manuscript book or two were all his store. He says, in effect, "Nothing on earth can help me now. My tongue, with which I preached, cannot plead with death, whose deaf ear no oratory can charm. My epistles and my power of writing cannot stand me in any stead, for no pen can arrest the death-warrant: it is written, and I must die. Friends cannot help me. Titus, Timothy, none of these can come to my aid. Neither Barnabas nor Silas can pass through the death-stream with me: I must ford the torrent alone." He felt as every man must who is a true Christian, and is about to die, that he must commit his spirit unto Christ, and watch for his appearing. He determined, whether he did die or live, that he would spend and be spent for the Lord Jesus. Brethren, we do not yet know what dying is:

the way to the other land is an untrodden path as yet. We read about heaven, and so on, but we know very little of the way thither. To the mind of one about to die the unknown frequently causes a creeping sensation of fear, and the heart is full of horror. Paul felt the chill of death coming over him, and by this means his trust in himself was killed, and he was driven to rely upon his God. If nothing else will cure us of self-confidence we may be content to have the rope about our neck, or to lay our neck upon the block, or to feel the death-rattle in our throats: we may be satisfied to sink as in the deep waters, if this would cure us of trusting in ourselves. Such was the case with Paul, when his gracious Master put forth his hand to turn him aside from all glorying in the flesh.

What was more, I think Paul means here that *the sentence of death which he heard outside wrought within his soul a sense of entire helplessness.* He was striving to fight for the kingdom and gospel of Christ, but he saw that he must be baffled if he had nothing to rely upon but himself; he was hampered and hemmed in on every side by the opposing Jews, who would not permit him to go about his work in peace. He despaired even of his life. He was not able to get at his work, for these persons were always about him, howling at him, uttering falsehoods against him, and hindering him. He became so worried and wearied that he was pressed and oppressed, immeasureably loaded and brought into such a state of mind that all inward comfort failed him, and he was obliged to look above for succour. His faculties were cramped as with a mortal rigour, his reason argued against him, and his imagination rather created terrors than expectations. He knew the experience so poetically described by Kirke White in his hymn upon the star of Bethlehem:

> "Deep horror, then, my vitals froze,
> Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem."

And he also knew the joy of the other two lines of the verse—

> "When suddenly a star arose,
> It was the star of Bethlehem."

Paul's mind was so struck with death within himself that he could not stem the torrent, and would have drifted to despair had he not given himself up into the hands of grace divine, and proved the loving power of God.

My brethren, you may never have experienced this, and I do not wish that you may do so to the same extent as the apostle, for the Lord may not bring you into a condition of exaltation, where you are so exposed to the peril of self-confidence, and therefore it may not be necessary to make you feel to the same extent this sentence of death; but I am aware that some of God's people here know what it is to see death written upon everything within them and around them, and these dare not trust in themselves. Ah, there are times with some of us when we appear to lose all power to think aright, when we set ourselves to a subject, and our brain will not exercise itself upon it: when we wish to do right, and cannot tell which of two courses is the proper one. At times we cannot make out our way; we kneel to pray, and find that we cannot pray as we were wont to do, the whole energy and force

our spirit seems to be shrivelled up as though the simoom had blown
er the meadow of our soul, and left every blade of grass and floweret
ad beneath its burning breath. Such things do happen unto men, and
ien they happen this is God's severe but effectual treatment, whereby
prevents their trusting in themselves. You have said sometimes of a
ry useful person,—"God honours that man, and I am afraid he will be
oud." You might well tremble for him were it not that behind the
or God whips the man, and makes him loathe himself in dust and
nes. If the great Father favours any one of you with usefulness to any
eat extent or degree, depend upon it he will favour you also with
miliations and spiritual conflicts, unless, indeed, you have so much
ace that you do not need these correctives, and this is not the case
th many. Brethren, take the bitter with the sweet; all things work
ether for good, not one alone, neither the exaltation nor the depression
ne, but "all things work *together* for good to them that love God."
e compound brings the benefit to us: as one drug in a compound
edicine counteracts another, and the whole result is health, so is it with
e total sum of divers providences, it brings benefit to us and glory to
d.

I think I need not say any more about this remedy, except to notice
at the Lord uses the same treatment in dealing with men who as yet
e not saved. Why is it that one of the first works of grace on a man
to take away all his comfort and hope? I will soon tell you. Suppose
at a poor man had fallen into such a state of mind that he could not
ar the sun, but lived in perpetual candle light. He dreamed that no
ht could equal his poor tapers, and he despised the sun:—candles for
n, he hated daylight. By the way, I am not wild in this supposition,
there are people who cannot worship God without candles, even in
e daylight, and yet they are not said to be insane. But to return to
e imaginary case, our poor, weak-minded friend is prejudiced against
e sun, and we aim to bring him into brightness. How shall we pro-
ed? I think we had better blow out his candles, and leave him in
e dark, and then, perhaps, he will be willing to try the light of
aven. Then I would take him out of doors, and let him see the sun;
d, after he had once beheld its superior light, he would never be able
praise his poor candles again. The first thing is to blow his candles
t; and the first thing to bring a man to Christ, the divine light, is
put out his own feeble tapers of self-trust. I have heard of one
o fell into the water and sank, and a strong swimmer standing on the
ore did not at the same instant plunge in, though fully resolved to
cue him. The man went down the second time, and then he who
uld rescue him was in the water swimming near him, but not too near,
iting very cautiously till his time came. He who was drowning was
trong, energetic man, and the other was too prudent to expose himself
the risk of being dragged under by his struggles. He let the man
down for the third time, and then he knew that his strength was
ite exhausted, and swimming to him he grasped him and drew him
shore. If he had seized him at first, while the drowning man had
engths, they would have gone down together. The first part of human
vation is the sentence of death upon all human power and merit.
nen all hope in self is quite gone, Christ comes in, and with his

infinite grace rescues the soul from destruction. As long as you think you can swim, you will kick, and struggle, and drown; but when you see the futility of all your own efforts, and perceive that you are without strength, you will leave yourselves with Jesus, and be saved. The eternal power will come in when your power goes out. The sentence of death in yourselves will prevent your trusting in yourselves: death recorded and death confessed to be a just penalty will expel all vain hope, and grace will be welcomed, and the heart will believe with a true faith wrought in it by the Spirit of God.

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE CURE. It was sharp medicine, but it worked well with Paul, for we find first that Paul's self-trust was prevented: any rising token of it was effectually removed. He says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves." Under this influence he preached as though he ne'er might preach again, a dying man to dying men. I have heard of brethren who do not expect to die. I do not wish to disturb their hope if it gives them comfort, but I know there is something very salutary in my own sense of the nearness of death. Christ may come, it is true, and this faith has the same effect as the expectation of going home to him, but one way or the other, the sense of the insecurity of this mortal life is good for us. To bring death very near to the mind is a solemn, searching, sanctifying exercise. Our forefathers of centuries ago were wont to have a death's-head on the table where they read their Bibles. I do not recommend so sickening a device; we can have a *memento mori* in better form than that; still, it is greatly wise to talk with our last hours, to be familiar with the grave, to walk among those little hillocks where our predecessors sleep, and to remember that all the world is like a sandy sea-beach, where after the tide has gone innumerable little worm-casts cover all the plain. Such a worm-cast I too shall leave behind me. This world is full of death's handiwork, a very charnel-house; nay, better, name it a God's acre, a sleeping-place, where myriads lie waiting for the awakening trumpet. We, too, may expect to sleep with them, and therefore we must not confide in ourselves. Art thou a dying man, and canst thou trust thyself? More frail than the moth, driven up and down like a sere leaf in the tempest, canst thou trust thyself? I hope a sense of death will work a cure of that tendency in us.

When the sentence of death assumes the form of an experience of despair as to everything that is of our own selves, then it has thoroughly wrought the cure. I have gone up and down in my own soul where once sweet things did sing and fair hopes bloomed, and I have searched in every chamber to hear a note or find a flower, and I have found nought but silence and death. I have gone abroad into the fields of my imagination, where once I saw much that made my heart right glad, and I have seen a valley of dry bones, where death reigned alone. Everything which I formerly rejoiced in was touched by the paralyzing hand; all was dead within me, sentence was passed, and apparently executed upon my whole being. If a man does not trust God then, when will he? and if this does not take him off from self-confidence, what is to do it? This treatment never fails when the Holy Spirit uses it.

Remember, this was only half the result in Paul's case, for he does not only say that by this sentence of death he was delivered from trusting

himself, but he was led to trust "in God which raiseth the dead." w, my brethren, we have come out of the gloom of the sepulchre into glory of the resurrection. "God which raiseth the dead" is our hope. e doctrine of the resurrection is essential to the Christian system, and ul takes it for granted. When he was delivered from trusting in nself because of the sentence of death, the first thing he did was to st in the God and Father of his risen Lord.

For first he argued thus,—If I die, what matters it? God can raise me m the dead. If they stone me, if they smite me with the sword, if y fling me headlong into the sea, I shall rise again. I know that my deemer liveth, and that I shall see him when he appeareth.

He inferred, also, that if God could raise him from the dead he could serve him from a violent death. He that could restore him if he were d and rotten in the tomb could certainly keep him from dying till all life-work was accomplished. This inference is unquestionably true.

> "Plagues and deaths around me fly,
> Till he bids I cannot die;
> Not a single shaft can hit
> Till the God of love thinks fit."

mortal is every believer till his work is done. Paul felt this and was nforted.

He argued yet further that if God can raise the dead and call together e separate atoms of a body long since dissolved, and rebuild the house t of such ruin, then surely he could take his fainting powers, over ich the sentence of death has passed, and he could use them for his n purposes. Thus would I also reason with myself when I am deeply pressed. He can make me feel his life within me again; and he can ke great use of me under all my weaknesses and difficulties. It eds omnipotence to wake the dead; that same omnipotence can make triumph and enable me to do its will, whatever may stand in my y. Is not this a blessed form of argument,—that God who raiseth e dead can do for me, can do in me, can do by me great things, for ich his name shall have glory for ever and ever?

Brethren, we need to get away more and more from ourselves, and we ll never do it till we write this down in our books, that self is dead,— must make a corpse of it. We sometimes hear that in setting forth balance sheet of a banking establishment a mistake was committed putting down a doubtful asset at too high a value: we must keep ar of such a blunder in making up our spiritual balances. There no fear of undue depreciation if you say of anything which belongs self, "it is good for nothing: set it down as worthless." If then u have written yourself down at twenty shillings in the pound, r dear brother, I warn you that you will never realize it. But u say, "I never thought to get more than half-a-crown in the nd out of self"—you will never get that in good money. "Well, will put it down at a farthing in the pound." You will never lize even that: it will cost you more to get it than it is worth: it is leception altogether. He that trusts in himself not only gets not a thing in the pound out of what he trusted in, but he is a loser by his lish confidence. I should not like to realize myself; it would be an

awful loss, and leave a great gap in my exchequer; for what am I but a mass of wounds, a bag of necessities, a mountain of weakness, a world of infirmities, and nothing else worth mentioning? Do not put yourself down in your spiritual assets at all except as a debt, a liability, and an encumbrance. Say, "Self is dead," and you will be happy if you find that he is dead, for the most of your trouble will come from his being too much alive. That old corrupt nature—ah, the vagabond, if he were indeed dead, and would never struggle again, what a mercy! But there is life in the old dog yet, life of a troublesome sort, full of mischief. Wisdom reckons self as a dead and worthless thing, to be mortified, but never to be trusted. Folly talks otherwise, and bids you think well of yourself, but do not listen to its dotings. He says, "You are getting an old man now; those grey hairs have brought experience and wisdom: you are not like those young chits of children that have just come into the church." No; but there is no fool like an old fool; mind you do not become another example of that old saying. Do not say to yourself, "Ah! now you are a man of wide experience, you are: you are not like those narrow-minded people who never went beyond their cottage or the hedges of their little farm. You have had a splendidly wide experience." Ah! but no blunder is so great as the blunder of a great man: no man is capable of doing so much mischief as the man who has capacity for doing great good. "Oh, but," says another, "I am so careful, so guarded, that there can be no fear of me." Yet no one is so likely to sleep as the watchman who flatters himself that he does not even doze. So it used to be in the old days; and you watchful people are sure to go wrong if you are proud of being watchful. If, on the other hand, you feel that you are not as watchful as you ought to be, and pray to be made more so, you will be kept right. Trust in ourselves is a kind of manna which will breed worms and stink, and it will make our house unbearable, and ourselves sick. Sweep it out! Oh, for a state of weakness that is strong in the divine strength. Oh, to be nothing, to be nothing, that God may be all in all! Amen and amen. So let it be.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—125, 624, 741.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAMUEL: AN EXAMPLE OF INTERCESSION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 9TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way."—1 Samuel xii. 23.

IT is a very great privilege to be permitted to pray for our fellow-men. Prayer in each man's case must necessarily begin with personal petitions, for until the man is himself accepted with God he cannot act as an intercessor for others; and herein lies part of the excellence of intercessory prayer, for it is to the man who exercises it aright a mark of inward grace, and a token for good from the Lord. Thou mayest be sure that thy King loves thee when he will permit thee to speak a word to him on behalf of thy friend. When the heart is enlarged in believing supplication for others, all doubts about personal acceptance with God may cease; he who prompts us to love has certainly given us that love, and what better proof of his favour do we desire? It is a great advance upon anxiety for our own salvation when we have risen out of the narrowness of dread about ourselves into the broader region of care for a brother's soul. He who in answer to his intercession has seen others blessed and saved may take it as a pledge of divine love, and rejoice in the condescending grace of God. Such prayer rises higher than any petition for ourselves, for only he who is in favour with the Lord can venture upon pleading for others. Moreover, it shows an enlarged heart, a participation in the spirit of love, and a growing likeness to Christ. Earnest longings for the good of those around us show that we are beginning to take our right position towards our fellow men, and are no longer living as if we were ourselves the sole end and aim of our own existence. Intercessory prayer is an act of communion with Christ, for Jesus pleads for the sons of men. It is a part of his priestly office to make intercession for his people. He hath ascended up on high to this end, and exercises this office continually within the veil. When we pray for our fellow-sinners we are in sympathy with our divine Saviour, who made intercession for the transgressors. It is well to remember that wondrous text from which we preached the other Sunday morning, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance": when we beg for conversions we are asking for Christ, and with Christ, and herein we have fellowship with him.

Such prayers are often of unspeakable value to those for whom they are offered. Many of us trace our conversion, if we go to the root of it, to the prayers of certain godly persons. In innumerable instances the prayers of parents have availed to bring young people to Christ. Many more will have to bless God for praying teachers, praying friends, praying pastors. Obscure persons confined to their beds are often the means of saving hundreds by their continual pleadings with God. The book of remembrance will reveal the value of these hidden ones, of whom so little is thought by the mass of Christians. As the body is knit together by bands, and sinews, and interlacing nerves and veins, so is the whole body of Christ converted into a living unity by mutual prayers; we were prayed for, and now in turn we pray for others. Not only the conversion of sinners, but the welfare, preservation, growth, comfort and usefulness of saints are abundantly promoted by the prayers of their brethren; hence apostolic men cried, "Brethren, pray for us"; he who was the personification of love said, "Pray one for another that ye may be healed," and our great Lord and Head ended his earthly career by a matchless prayer for those whom the Father had given him.

Intercessory prayer is a benefit to the man who exercises it, and is often a better channel of comfort than any other means of grace. The Lord turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Even where such prayer does not avail for its precise object it has its results. David tells us that he prayed for his enemies: he says, in Psalm xxxv. 13, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting." And he adds, "my prayer returned into mine own bosom." He sent forth his intercession, like Noah's dove, but as it found no rest for the sole of its foot, and no blessing came of it, it returned to him who sent it, and brought back with it an olive-leaf plucked off, a sense of peace to his own spirit; for nothing is more restful to the heart than to have prayed for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. Prayers for others are pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves; they are no waste of breath, but have a result guaranteed by the faithful Promiser.

I commend, therefore, to you, my brethren and sisters in Christ, the abundant resources of intercessory prayer: use them without stint. My friend, hast thou nothing to ask for for thyself? Then thou art indeed very rich; but if thou hast ever come to such a height of happiness as that, now use thy power in prayer for the church and for the world. Art thou, like Elias, perfectly content with the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil, which thy God so marvellously multiplies for thy support? Then pray him to send a sound of abundance of rain for the sake of the multitudes that are perishing with famine. What if, like Abraham, thou art thyself secure, yet pray for the cities of the plain which are soon to be overwhelmed with destruction. If, like Esther, thou dwellest in the king's palace, art thou not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Therefore, seek an audience of his royal Majesty, and pray for those of thy race who are in jeopardy. If like Nehemiah you hold a high position in the royal courts, turn it to account for the banished ones, and when you next wait upon the King, present to him a petition for your brethren. It is to incite you to earnest intercession that I have selected this text. I would have you stirred up to diligent supplication by the

example of Samuel, who is worthy to be placed in the very forefront of intercessors.

I. Let us first dwell upon HIS HABIT OF INTERCESSION, for it was most manifest in Samuel. We gather this from the text. He says, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in *ceasing* to pray for you." It is clear, therefore, that he had been in the continual habit and practice of praying for Israel; he could not speak of ceasing to pray if he had not hitherto continued in prayer. Samuel had become so rooted in the habit of prayer for the people that he seems to start at the very thought of bringing his intercession to an end. The people, measuring the prophet by themselves, half suspected that he would be irritated with them, and would, therefore, deny them his prayers; therefore in the nineteenth verse we read, "All the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not." They greatly valued his prayers, and felt as if their national life, and perhaps their personal lives, depended upon his pleadings: therefore they urged him as men who plead for their lives that he would not cease to pray for them, and he replied, "God forbid that I should." The denial of his prayers does not seem to have entered his thoughts. To my mind the words represent him as astonished at the idea, horrified and half indignant at the suggestion—"What I, Samuel, I who have been your servant from my childhood, since the day when I put on the little ephod, and waited for you in the house of the Lord; I that have lived for you and have loved you, and was willing to have died in your service, shall I ever cease to pray for you?" He says, "God forbid." It is the strongest expression that one can well imagine, and this, together with his evident surprise shows that the prophet's habit of intercession was rooted, constant, fixed, abiding, a part and parcel of himself.

If you will read his life you will see how truly this was the case. Samuel was born of prayer. A woman of a sorrowful spirit received him from God, and joyfully exclaimed, "For this child I prayed." He was named in prayer, for his name Samuel signifies "*asked of God.*" Well did he carry out his name and prove its prophetic accuracy, for having commenced life by being himself asked of God, he continued asking of God, and all his knowledge, wisdom, justice, and power to rule were things which came to him because "asked of God." He was nurtured by a woman of prayer at the first, and when he left her it was to dwell in the house of prayer all the days of his life. His earliest days were honoured by a divine visitation, and he showed even then that waiting, watchful spirit which is the very knee of prayer. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" is the cry of a simple, sincere heart, such as the Lord ever accepts. We all think of Samuel under that little figure so often painted and sculptured, in which a sweet child is seen in the attitude of prayer. We all seem to know little Samuel, the praying child: our boys and girls know him as a familiar friend, but it is as kneeling with clasped hands. He was born, named, nurtured, housed, and trained in prayer, and he never departed from the way of supplication. In his case the text was fulfilled, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise;" and he so persevered in prayer that he brought forth fruit in old age, and testified of God's power to those who came after him. So famous did Samuel become as an intercessor that, if

you will turn to the ninety-ninth Psalm, at the sixth verse, you will read a short but very fragrant eulogy of him: "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name." If Moses and Aaron are selected as being consecrated men, leaders of God's Israel in service and sacrifice, Samuel is selected as the praying man, the man who calls upon God's name. All Israel knew Samuel as an intercessor as well as they knew Aaron as a priest. Perhaps even more notably you get the same inspired estimate of him in Jeremiah xv., at the first verse, where he is again classed with Moses: "Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Here there is no doubt an allusion to the prevalent prayer of Moses, when in the agony of his heart he cried, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy Book which thou hast written." This was a high form of pleading, but such is God's valuation of Samuel as an intercessor that he puts him side by side with Moses, and by way of threatening to sinful Israel he tells Jeremiah that he would not even listen to Moses and Samuel if they stood before him. It is well to learn the art of prayer in our earliest days, for then we grow up to be proficient in it. Early prayer grows into powerful prayer. Hear this, you young people, and may the Lord now make Samuels of you. What an honour to be called to intercede for others, to be the benefactor of our nation, or even the channel of blessing to our own households. Aspire to it, my dear young friends. Perhaps you will never preach, but you may pray. If you cannot climb the pulpit you may bow before the mercy-seat, and be quite as great a blessing.

As to the success of Samuel's prayers, read his life, and you will find that he wrought great deliverances for the people. In the seventh chapter of this book we find that the Philistines grievously oppressed Israel, and Samuel bravely called the people together, to consider their condition, and bade them turn from idolatry, and worship the only true God, and promised them his prayers as a boon which they greatly valued. These are his words: "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." He then took a lamb, and offered it up for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord, "and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." This is one of the grand events of his life, and yet it is fairly descriptive of his whole career. He cried, and the Lord heard. In this instance the Israelites marched to battle, but Jehovah went before them, in answer to the prophet's prayer. You could hear the rolling of the drums in the march of the God of armies, and see the glittering of his spear, for so is the history of the battle recorded: "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them." The conclusion of the whole is, "So the Philistines were subdued"; that is to say, the prayer of Samuel was the conquering weapon, and Philistia crouched beneath its power. Oh ye who know the power of prayer, [illegible]te this on your banners,—"So the Philistines were subdued."

[illegible]muel's prayers were so prevalent that the very elements were

controlled by him. Oh, the power of prayer! It has been ridiculed: it has been represented as an unscientific and an unpractical thing, but we who daily try it know that its power cannot be exaggerated, and do not feel even a shadow of doubt concerning it. There is such power in prayer that it "moves the arm that moves the world." We have but to know how to pray, and the thunder shall lift up its voice in answer to our cry, and Jehovah's arrows shall be scattered abroad to the overthrowing of his adversaries. How should those be able to judge of prayer who never ask at all, or never ask in faith? Let those bear witness to whom prayer is a familiar exercise, and to whom answers from God are as common as the day. Over a father's heart no power has so great a control as his child's necessity, and in the case of our Father who is in heaven it is specially so. He must hear prayer, for he cannot dishonour his own name, or forget his own children.

When in his old age the people began to turn against Samuel, and to express dissatisfaction with his unworthy sons, it is beautiful to notice how Samuel at once resorted to prayer. Look at the eighth chapter, the fifth verse: the people "said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us." The old man was sorely grieved; it was natural that he should be. But look at the next words. Did Samuel scold the people? Did he send them home in a huff? No. It is written, "And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." He told his Master about them, and his Master said to him, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected *thee*,"—do not lay it to heart as if it were a personal affront to thee—"but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." This slight upon God's servant was a rejection of God himself, and he would not have Samuel lay to heart their ingratitude to him, but think of their wicked conduct to the Lord their God.

Thus, you see, Samuel was a man of abundant prayer, and in the twenty-first verse we read that, after he had entered his protest, and told the people of all that they would have to suffer from a king, how he would tax them and oppress them, and take their sons to be soldiers and their daughters to wait in his palace, and take their fields and vineyards, though they still persisted in saying, "Nay, but we will have a king," he made no angry answer but returned to his God in secret communion, "Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord." Oh, that we were wise enough to do the like! Instead of going about and telling one and another of the opprobrious things that have been said about us, it were well to go straight away to our closet and rehearse them in the ears of the Lord. Samuel was thus, you see, throughout his whole official life, a man mighty in prayer, and when the people left him and followed after their new-made king, our text shows that he did not cease to intercede for them. He says, "God forbid that I should cease to pray to God for you."

Nor was this all, when Saul had turned aside and become a traitor to his divine Lord, Samuel made intercession for him. One whole night he spent in earnest entreaty, though it was all in vain; and many a time and oft did he sigh for the rejected prince. The old man had been, from his youth up, an intercessor, and he never ceased from the holy

[illegible] lips were closed in death. Now, beloved, you are not [illegible] land, else would I plead with you to pray much for the [illegible] you rule. You are not all pastors and teachers, else would [illegible] do not abound in prayer the blood of souls will be [illegible] skirts. Some of you, however, are teachers of the young: do [illegible] that you have done anything for your classes till you have [illegible] for them. Be not satisfied with the hour or two of teaching in [illegible] be frequent in your loving supplications. Many of you are [illegible]. How can you discharge your duty towards your children except you bear their names upon your hearts in prayer? Those of you who are not found in these relationships have nevertheless some degree of authority, some measure of influence, some position in which you can be useful to your fellows, and these demand your dependence upon God. You cannot discharge your responsibilities as relatives, as citizens, as neighbours, nay, as Christian men, unless you often make supplication for all ranks and conditions. To pray for others must become to you a habit from which you would not cease even if they provoked you to the utmost degree; for you would only cry out, God forbid that I should cease to pray for you, for it would be a great sin in the sight of the Most High.

Thus have we enlarged upon our first head, the habit of intercession.

II. Now, secondly, I call you to notice in Samuel's case HIS PROVOCATION TO CEASE FROM INTERCESSION, which provocation he patiently endured.

The first provocation was *the slight which they put upon himself.* The grand old man who had all the year round made his circuit from place to place to do justice had never looked at a bribe. He had done everything for them without fee or reward. Though he had a right to his stipend, yet he did not take it; in the generosity of his spirit he did everything gratuitously, like Nehemiah in after days who said, "The former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God." Samuel throughout a long life had kept the land in peace, and innumerable blessings had come to Israel through his leadership; but now he was getting old and somewhat infirm, though he was far from being worn out, and they seized on this excuse for setting up a king. The old man felt that there was life and work in him yet; but they clamoured for a king, and therefore their aged friend must give up his office and come down from his high position. It displeases him when he first hears their demand, but after a little time spent in prayer he resigns his position very pleasantly, and all his anxiety is to find the right man for the throne. When the man is found he is full of care that the Lord's anointed shall be guided aright in the kingdom; and without a thought about himself he rejoices at the sight of one whose opening days promised so well. His deposition was a hard thing, mark you, an unkind, ungenerous thing; but he did not pray one atom the less for the people because of it; probably he prayed much more; for as his mother prayed most when [illegible]orrow of her heart was greatest, so was it with him. You can see [illegible]n in the mother in many respects, and in this point in particular

at he prays most when he is most grieved As the sandal-wood tree rfumes the axe which smites it, so his bleeding heart poured out peti- ns for those who grieved him.

Beyond the provocation which came from their slight upon himself he lt wounded by *their utter rejection of his solemn protest.* He stood before em and reasoned with them in the clearest possible manner: "What do u want a king for?" he seemed to say. "This will be the manner of the ng that shall reign over you; he will take your sons and appoint them r himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run fore his chariots. He will take your daughters to be confec- naries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers; and he will take your lds, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, id give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your seed, id of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants; and will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your odliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He ill take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants; and ye all cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen u; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." There was sound mmon sense in all these, and every word turned out to be true fact before long, and yet they would not listen. They said, "Nay, t we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; d that our king may judge us, and fight our battles." Despite their jection of his warning, the venerable man did not grow testy. It is metimes the infirmity of wise men of years and weight, that when they ve presented a clear case, presented it earnestly in all simplicity of art, and the thing looks as plain as that twice two make four, then if eir hearers deliberately persist in defying their warning they grow evish, or perhaps it is more fair to say they exhibit a justifiable indig- tion. Some aged men would have said, "Well, then, I will have thing further to do with you; I shall go somewhere else. I shall leave mah and journey to some other land where, perhaps, they may hear word of the Lord." Not so, he is always hopeful, and if they will t do the best thing possible, he will try to lead them to do the second st. If they will not abide under the direct rule of the Lord, as their ng, he hopes that they will do well under a human king who shall be iceroy under God, and so he continues hopefully to pray for them, d to make the best he can of them.

At last it came to this, that the nation must have a king, and their ng must be crowned. They must go to Gilgal to settle the kingdom, d then Samuel stood up and in the words which I read to you just w he declared how he had dealt with them, how he had never frauded nor oppressed, nor taken anything from them, and he told m that their choice of a king was to some extent a rejection of God, t they were putting aside the best of rules and the most honourable governments to go down to the level of the nations. Still, *they rejected last appeal,* and it is beautiful to my mind to see how calmly he drops question when he has given his last address, and made his most solemn al to heaven. Their obstinate adherence to their whim did not cause to restrain prayer on their behalf. "God forbid," saith he, "that I uld cease to pray for you."

The practical lesson of this is that when you are tempted to cease from pleading for certain persons you must not yield to the suggestion. They have ridiculed your prayers: they tell you that they do not want them: they have even made a taunt and a jest of your pious wishes on their behalf. Never mind. Retaliate by still greater love. Do not cease to wrestle with God for them. It may be you have been very much disappointed in them; your heart breaks to see how they have gone aside, yet go with your deep anxieties to the mercy-seat, and cry out again for them. What will become of them if you leave them to themselves? Do not leave off interceding, my dear friends, though you are provoked to do so in ten thousand ways.

In addition to this, you see that, after clearly putting the case in the earnestness of your soul before them, they reject the right, and they choose the evil; but let not that daunt you. Never let a sinner master you, and he will have done so if by his sin he drives you to neglect prayer.

It may be that you think, partly in unbelief, and partly through trembling anxiety, that really their doom is sealed, and they will go on to perdition. Let this rather increase the intensity of your prayer than in the least degree diminish it. Till sinners are in hell cry to God for them. As long as there is breath in their bodies and in your body cause the voice of your supplication to be heard. When once souls pass into the spirit-world prayer is unavailing, but up to the last hour it may prevail. Perhaps you have sometimes been tempted to wish you could pray for the dead; let that vain wish stimulate you to be in earnest for the living. Agonize in prayer while your entreaties can be heard. Cry mightily unto God whatsoever happens to damp your hopes, considering that it is a temptation of Satan if it is suggested to you that you should cease to supplicate. Your husband, good woman, what if he does grow more drunken and more profane, pray for him still; for God, who can draw out leviathan as with a hook, can yet take this great sinner and make a saint of him. What if your son does seem to be more profligate than ever, follow him with many entreaties, and weep before God about him still. Loving mother and gracious father, join your fervent cries day and night at the mercy-seat and you shall yet obtain your desire. Let nothing quench the flame upon the altar, nor the hope in your souls.

As I have already said, Samuel prayed all the more because of the trouble that came upon him: let it be so with you. Samuel never could separate himself from the people; he never tried to disentangle himself from being one with them, but he laid their case upon his breast. He was the very heart of Israel, vitally united to the whole body, and he could not be torn away from his beloved people. Herein lies the secret of intense intercession. Do, I pray you, try to make the interests of others your own interests. Do not think that it is enough that *you* are saved. Do not sit down and fold your arms, and make a pillow for an idle head out of the sovereignty of God. No, you are a part of the family; endeavour to act as such. Pray for men because you also are a man. A heathen philosopher once said, "I am a man, and everything that concerns man interests me"; how much more should the Christian say this, since he should be like his Lord and Master, who was the standard of a generous-hearted, self-sacrificing man. The Son of

man was one of our Lord's favourite titles to denote that he linked his life with our manhood. Be you also true sons of men, brothers to all mankind. I charge you, if you know how to pray for yourselves, exercise the sacred privilege of intercession for others. Be like Abraham, who pleaded for Sodom; like Moses, who stood in the gap for the tribes; like Elias, who prevailed for Israel. If you have learned to pray practise the holy art till you obtain much power with God; for so shall you bring down blessings upon those who else would perish under the curse. Thus much upon the provocation which Samuel endured, under which he still remained true to his high calling.

III. I come, in the third place, briefly to notice Samuel in HIS PERSEVERING INTERCESSION. Though the people thus provoked him he did not cease from prayer for them; for, first, there and then, he offered fresh supplication for them, and that cry was heard, and Saul was dowried with a rich measure of favour to start with. Samuel did not cease his prayer for Saul when Saul had gone far astray, for we find this passage: "Then came the word of the Lord to Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandment; and it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night." "All night"! I think I see the old man in an agony for Saul, whom he loved. Old men need sleep, but the prophet forsook his bed, and in the night watches poured out his soul unto the Lord. Though he received no cheering answer, he still continued to cry; for we read, a little further on, that the Lord said to him, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" He was pushing the case as far as ever he could push it, till the Lord gave him warning that there was no use in it. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" It is to be admired in Samuel, that, even though Saul may have committed the sin which is unto death, and Samuel had some fear that his fate was fixed, yet he prayed on in desperate hope. The apostle John puts the case thus: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." He does not in such a case forbid our prayers, neither does he encourage them, but I take it that he gives us a permit to pray on. We do not know for certain that the most guilty person has indeed passed the bound of mercy, and therefore we may intercede with hope. If we have a horrible dread upon us that possibly our erring relative is beyond hope, if we are not commanded to pray, we are certainly not forbidden, and it is always best to err on the safe side, if it be erring at all. We may still go to God, even with a forlorn hope, and cry to him in the extremity of our distress. We are not likely to hear the Lord say to us, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" We are not likely to hear him say, "How long will you pray for your boy? how long will you mourn over your husband? I do not intend to save them." We do not have such depressing revelations, and we ought to be very thankful that we do not, for now we may go on hopefully pleading for all who come in our way. We may continue, and should continue, as Samuel did, to wrestle in prayer as long as we live.

When the prophet knew that Saul was hopelessly rejected he did not

cease to pray for the nation, but went down to Bethlehem and anointed David, and when David was pursued by the malice of Saul we find him harbouring David at Ramah, and exhibiting the power of prayer in his own house and in the holy place; for when Saul came down thinking to seize David, even in the seer's house, there was a prayer-meeting being held, and Saul was so struck with it that he took to prophesying himself, and lay down all night among them disrobed and humbled. Men exclaimed, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The malicious king could not venture to touch Samuel. The prophet was a gentle, mild, loving man; and yet the black-hearted Saul always had an awe of him, so that he took hold of his skirts for protection, and after he was dead wickedly sought to his supposed spirit for guidance. The man of God had evidently impressed the tall reprobate with the weight of his holy character. It is written that God was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground; and this was because he was a praying man. He who can prevail with God for man can always prevail with man for God. If you can overcome heaven by prayer, you can overcome earth by preaching: if you know the art of speaking to the Eternal, it will be a small thing to speak to mortal men. Rest assured that the very essence of all true power over men for their good must lie in power with God in secret: when we have waited upon the Lord, and prevailed, our work is well-nigh done.

I pray you, therefore, dear friends, still persevere in supplication, and be supported in your perseverance by the knowledge that it would be a sin to cease to pray for those who have been the subjects of your petitions. Samuel confesses that it would have been sinful on his part to abstain from intercession. How so? Why, if he ceased to pray for that people, he would be neglecting his office, for God had made him a prophet to the nation, and he must intercede for them or neglect his duty. It would show a want of love to the Lord's chosen people if he did not pray for them. How could he teach them if he was not himself taught of God? How could he possibly hope to sway them if he had not enough affection for them to cry to God on their behalf? It would be in his case, too, a sin of anger. It would look as if he were in a pet with them and with God too, because he could not be all that he would wish to be. "God forbid," he said, "I should harbour such anger in my bosom as to cease to pray for you." It would have been a neglect of the divine glory; for whatever the people might be, God's name was wrapped up in them, and if they did not prosper the Lord would not be glorified in the eyes of the heathen. He could not give up praying for them, for their cause was the cause of God. It would have been a cruelty to souls if he who possessed such power in prayer had restrained it. Now, brethren and sisters, it will be sin on your part if you neglect the mercy-seat. You will grieve the Holy Spirit, you will rob Christ of his glory, you will be cruel to souls dead in sin, and you will be false and traitorous to the Spirit of grace, and to your sacred calling. You are kings and priests unto God, and what are you to offer as priests if you do not present before the Lord prayers and supplications for the children of men? Therefore stay not your intercession lest the Lord be grieved with you.

IV. Our last point is that Samuel showed HIS SINCERITY IN INTERCESSION by corresponding action, for he says in the words of the text,

God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way." So far from ceasing off praying, he would be doubly diligent to teach them; and he did so. He taught them by reminding them of God's promises, that he would not forsake his people: by directing them how to act—"Serve the Lord in truth with all your heart": by urging motives upon them—"consider the great things he hath done for you": and by adding a solemn warning, "If you shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." After praying for your friends, do try as well as you can to answer your own prayer by using the means which God ordinarily blesses. Some persons make idle prayers, for they use no effort for obtaining their requests. If a husbandman asks for a harvest, he also ploughs and sows, for else his supplications would be hypocritical. If we wish to see our neighbours converted, we shall labour for it in all ways. We shall invite them to go with us where the gospel is faithfully preached, or we shall place a good book in their way, or we shall speak with them personally about eternal things. If I knew where gold was to be had for the picking up, and I wanted my neighbour to be rich, I would tell him of the precious deposit, and ask him to come and gather some of the treasure with me. But many never think of inviting a neighbour or a friend who is a Sabbath-breaker to go with them to the house of God; and there are thousands in London who only want an invitation and they would be sure to come, once, at any rate, and who can tell but that once might lead to their conversion? If I desire the salvation of anyone I ought to tell him as best as I can what his condition is, and what the way of salvation is, and how he may find rest. All men are approachable at some time or in some way. It is very imprudent to rush at everybody as soon as you see them, without thought or ordinary prudence, for you may disgust those whom you wish to win: but those who earnestly plead for others, and bestir themselves to seek them, are generally taught of God, and so they are made wise as to time, manner, and subject. A man who wishes to shoot birds will, after a while, become expert in the sport, because he will give his mind to it: he will after a little practice become a noted marksman and know all about guns and dogs. A man who wants to catch salmon has his heart set upon his angling, and becomes absorbed in the pursuit. He soon learns how to use his rod and how to manage his fish. So he who longs to win souls, and puts his heart into it, finds out the knack of it by some means, and the Lord gives him success. I could not teach it to you, you must practise in order to find it out; but this I will say, no man is clear of his fellow's blood simply because he has prayed to be so. Suppose we had around this parish of Newington a number of people who were dying of hunger, and we were to have a prayer-meeting that God would relieve their wants: would it not be hypocrisy worthy to be ridiculed and held up to reprobation if, after having prayed for these people, we all went home and ate our own dinners and did not give them a farthing's-worth of bread? The truly benevolent man puts his hand in his pocket and says, "What can I do that my prayer may be answered?" I have heard of one who prayed in New York for a certain number of very poor families that he had visited, and he asked the Lord that they might be fed and clothed. His little son said, "Father, if I

were God I should tell you to answer your own prayer, for you h plenty of money." Thus the Lord might well say to us when we h been interceding, "Go and answer your own prayer by telling your frie of my Son." Do you sing, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel"? T give it wings covered with silver. Do you sing, "Waft, waft, ye win his story"? Then spend your breath for it. There is a power in y gifts; there is a power in your speech; use these powers. If you can personally do much, you can do a great deal by helping another to pre Christ; but chief and first you ought to do somewhat by your own ha heart, and tongue. Go and teach the good and right way, and th shall your prayers be heard.

And finally, to come to a point that lies much upon my heart, I wi this evening so to speak to the crowd of strangers who will come a hear me that many may be turned unto the Lord. Many of these peo will not come because they want to hear the gospel, but because th have heard that I am an odd man and they are curious to hear and so eccentric a person. Never mind, they will hear the truth: for it sh be my earnest endeavour to preach Christ crucified, and him alone. beseech you, every one of you, to pray for a blessing. I charge you, everything that is kind to myself, by everything that is benevolent your fellow-men, by everything that is grateful to my Lord, do p that there may be a blessing upon the word that shall be spoken. W knows how many may be brought to the Saviour's feet? They will be hearers of the same kind as certain of you, who have grown harde by hearing the gospel: many of them will be quite fresh people whom everything will be new. What a fine opportunity to fish am so great a shoal, if we are but taught of God how to throw the n **This afternoon pray for a blessing. Come here in a company a entreat the Lord to visit us. You, who are much occupied, so t you could not attend a meeting, can nevertheless set apart a quarter an hour, at any rate, for private prayer, that we may obtain a blessi In the Sunday-school pray for a blessing; God hears little childr and sends answers which else had never come. In all departments work let the workers cry unto God that he will this night save s and get glory to himself. I shall be deeply thankful to you, and Lord will bless you; therefore do it, I pray you, for his sake. Amen.**

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel xii. 1—

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—177, 972, 958.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DIVINE SURPRISES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence."—Isaiah lxiv. 3.

THE people of God were in a very sad state when this chapter described them. Isaiah pictures them as brought into the lowest degree of fear and sorrow. He pleads with God to return to his chosen people, and restore their former peace and prosperity. He makes use of the past as an argument for the future, and recites the wonderful acts of God in days gone by as an encouragement to expect that he would do the like again. If it were not that God is unchangeable, no inference could be drawn from his past behaviour toward us; but inasmuch as he is immutably the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, we may safely infer that what he has done he will do again. They say that history repeats itself: it were more true to say that God abides the same, that his ways are everlasting, and his mercy endureth for ever. Therefore it is good and sound pleading to say, "Thou hast done this and that, therefore again make bare thine arm, and once more let thy people rejoice in thy faithfulness and thy power."

While we may all do this on behalf of the church of God, and find a rich store of arguments in her past history, we may also do it for ourselves. Some of us are now getting into years, and we have known the Saviour for thirty years or more: we ought to be well supplied with reasons for trusting him, and I am sure we are so. Let us look back on the past, and remember how he has forgiven our transgressions, how he has recovered our backslidings, how he has relieved our necessities, how he has cheered our despondencies, and strengthened our weaknesses: he that is our God is still the God of salvation, and he will continue still to bless us, even to the end. Because the Lord is my shepherd, and now maketh me to lie down in green pastures, therefore I conclude that "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." At the back of whatever I shall have to say this morning will lie this grand principle—that as the past is, so we may expect the future to be in reference to God's dealings with us.

Let us come more closely to our point. From the text, and from its connection, I gather, first, that *the presence of God is the one hope of his people.* In this text the prophet speaks of God's doing terrible things when he came down among his people. We shall next notice that *the presence of God creates surprises:* he did "things which we looked not for": we shall observe, thirdly, that *the presence of God achieves wonders,*—"the mountains flowed down at thy presence": and then, lastly, we shall come back to where we started, and reflect that *we may expect the like results from the divine presence* if we are privileged to enjoy it.

I. First let us meditate upon the fact that THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS THE ONE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. The prophet shows that he believed this, for he commences the chapter by a most ardent cry to God that he would come into the midst of his people: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down." A little before this (in the fifteenth verse of the previous chapter), he had prayed, "Look down from heaven"; but it is the characteristic of true prayer that it grows as it proceeds: he begins by asking God to look down; but he gathers intensity of desire and confidence of faith, and here he cries, "Come down." So eager is he that God should come, and come at once, that he speaks to him as though addressing a warrior who lingered in his tent while a battle was raging, who would be so eager to rush to the help of his friends that he would not stay to remove the canvas or to lift the curtain, but would rend a way for himself through the canopy to come at once to the deliverance of those who called him to the rescue. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens": stay not, Great God, to pass through the gate of pearl, but rend yon empyrean: let the blue firmament be torn in twain, and do thou descend from heaven upon rushing mighty winds, for the help of thy people. When our divine Lord opened the way by which God could come to us poor guilty men, he did not lift the curtain nor fold it up; but the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and so the door was left wide open for ever; for none can ever fix the veil in its place again. It was through the open heavens that Christ went in where he now stands to plead for us, and by that open heaven the sacred Spirit descended to rest upon the Church. The impetuous character of the simile here used shows that the prophet looked upon the divine visitation as the one thing needful for Israel. O Lord, we do not ask thee to cause the earth to bring forth plentifully, or to make our wealth increase, or to make the kings of the earth favourable to thy cause; but come thyself to bless thy people, and they will need no more. Oh that thou wouldest come down: even so, come quickly. Is not this the prayer of every true heart here that knows the need of the Church and the need of the age? We do not so much require more ministers, or more eloquent teachers, but more of the sacred presence. We do not want wealth in the church, or magnificent buildings, or ornate services, but we crave above all things that the living God will refresh his people. If the Lord were in the midst of us, if the shout of a king were heard in our camps, then would our armies march to the victory, and our foes would be discomfited.

The desire of the prophet in the present instance is abundantly

justified by the history of God's people in all times: for when the tribes were in Egypt what could set them free from the iron bondage? —what but the presence of God? The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." Then the Lord came down to deliver them, and you know with what signs and wonders he plagued the proud Egyptian oppressor. Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah?" but he soon received his answer when the waters were turned into blood, and the dust into lice; when the cattle died of murrain, and every green thing in the land was blasted with lightning or eaten with locusts. Pharaoh and his people learned that when God is in the midst of his oppressed and down-trodden people they are "like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf." God's presence in Israel with Moses and Aaron brought them out "with a high hand, and with an outstretched arm." When they started on that memorable night, after eating the passover, what was it that made the march of Israel so grand an event in history? Did not Jehovah lead the way? When they came to the borders of the Red Sea with the rocks on either side, and the angry host pursuing them, what was their defence but that God looked out from the fiery, cloudy pillar; and while his smile lit up the midnight of his people and made it bright as day, he looked forth from the cloudy side and troubled the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, so that they drave them heavily? It was God's presence that quickened the feet of Miriam and Israel's daughters on the other side of the sea, when they struck their timbrels and cried, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." God's presence did it all. He who amid their thick array his kingly dwelling made was the glory of their strength, the banner of their joy.

So was it when their marchings were through the lone wilderness. What made Israel thrive upon barren sand? What made the nation drink plenteously from the rock? It was the presence of God that made the earth a watered sod, the flint a gushing rill. The tabernacle stood in their midst, and the presence of God was symbolised there by a blaze of glory between the cherubim, and this it was that made Israel the chief among the nations. The whole of the story of Israel proves the same truth. God's presence was Israel's glory. When they grieved him and provoked him, then the feeblest of the nations round about them tyrannised over them. They were an insignificant and defenceless nation of themselves; but when God shone upon them they were great among the nations, and the sceptre of Israel was stretched from sea to sea. "God with us," when written on Israel's banner, secured them honour and conquest; but without God they could do nothing.

Dear friends, this truth which is thus borne out in the history of God's ancient people, is certainly true with us. The favour of God is the hope of all his people. First, we see this in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, when did you and I ever obtain comfort, or receive hope of acceptance, until we saw God with us in our flesh? The world must have perished if God had not come down to it in the person of his dear Son. At Bethlehem the wondrous mystery was seen: the Godhead veiled beneath the form of a babe. This was the birth of hope.

So, too, when the Lord Jesus comes to any one of us by his Spirit our hope begins. We see him as our Immanuel, and we are comforted. Dr. Watts most sweetly sings:—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

God saves us by coming to us in Christ with an atonement in his hands, wherewith to put away our sin.

Yes, and our hope of the perfection of our salvation still lies in the coming of Christ to us. We expect that when he cometh in the latter day, though our bodies may have seen corruption, and the worm may have devoured them, yet in our flesh we shall see God. When Christ shall come a second time the Archangel's trump shall sound, and then shall we receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, for which we now hopefully await. Because he lives we shall live also, and because he shall come to be revealed, we also shall be manifested. Our Lord's first coming in our flesh hath given us eternal salvation; his coming to us by his Spirit hath wrought in us a living faith, and his second coming by-and-by is the grand object of our hope. That day and hour no man knoweth, for the Father keepeth it in his own power; but the consummation of all our hopes is wrapped up in it, and therefore do we cry, "Come quickly; even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen." So, you see, brethren, it is the presence of God with us in Christ which is the ground of all our hope.

Until our Lord's glorious advent, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is our only dependence for success in all that we attempt. If we meet for prayer, it must be praying in the Holy Ghost, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought till he instructs us. It is hard praying to an absent God: the Lord's presence is the life of a prayer-meeting. If the Lord be not there to inspire the prayer, he is not there to hear the prayer. When we preach, it is poor testifying if we have not the Lord's anointing resting upon us, and his presence all around us. If the Spirit of God be not with the preacher, a silent tongue might be as efficient as the most eloquent speech. So is it with our missionary enterprise: it must be a failure unless the Lord be in it from first to last. Every missionary might fitly say, "If thy Spirit go not with me, carry me not up hence." Vain will it be to organize societies, enlist subscribers, and enter upon actual effort, and to spend money and zeal thereon, if the Lord be not there. "Without me ye can do nothing," said our Lord of old, and the same is true unto this day.

The presence of God is essential to each one of us if we are to be saved. It is well for the prodigal to arise and go to his father, but the saving moment comes when his father meets him. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran and had compassion on him,

and fell upon his neck and kissed him": there was the actual salvation. The lost sheep is not found till the Shepherd comes to it. God's coming to a man convinces him of sin: he stands up for self-righteousness till the Holy Ghost constrains him to own the truth. Never did a stony heart turn itself to flesh, or a blind eye remove its own darkness. God must come in infinite freeness of grace, and work with boundless power of love, or the dead sinner will remain dead, and the blinded mind will remain blind. Ay, and after the work is begun, the presence of God in the soul is needful to its continuance and progress. We never take a step towards God except with God. Even the faintest desire towards him is breathed into us by his own Spirit; and as for the higher works of grace in the soul, they are evidently all of God, for the assurance of faith, the confidence of hope, and the consecration of love, never were ascribed by their possessors to any source less than divine. Let a man try to serve God without God and he will fail. Sitting at Jesus' feet is our proper posture: when he teaches, we have knowledge; all else is conceit. In his company we are happy and useful; but apart from him we are miserable failures. Even in heaven itself the presence of God is the source of joy and perfection. Up yonder they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because the Lord God giveth them light: if he were not among them it would be dark as death-shade. The blessed ones drink from the river of his pleasures; no other stream makes glad the city of God. Their life is his life: their bliss is his own divine pleasure: they enter into Christ's glory, and they are filled with Christ's joy. Is it not clear enough that our most essential need is the nearness of God to our souls? "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." David's petition shall be mine: "Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it." "It is good for me to draw near unto God." O Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant,—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

II. The second point I wish to bring before you is, when the Lord comes HIS PRESENCE CREATES GREAT SURPRISES: "When thou didst terrible things *that we looked not for*, thou camest down."

It has always been so. Whenever God has come to men he has always surprised them. Even the most expectant among men have found their expectations far exceeded; while those who have been depressed, and have prophesied dark things, have been altogether taken aback to see the goodness of the Lord. God came to Jacob's house, and his favourite son was sold for a slave,—the Ishmaelites took him down into Egypt. "Ah," said Jacob when he thought on this and his other trials, "all these things are against me." He could not make out that there could be any good intended of the Lord when he cried, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye would take Benjamin away." And yet God was doing great things for him which he looked not for; for Joseph was set upon the throne of Egypt that he might provide a refuge for his old father and his brethren in the days when there should be a famine over all the earth. Then would he say unto them, "Come down unto me, tarry not; thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and there will I nourish thee." God was doing for the trembling patriarch "things which he looked not for." I shall not stop to give instances in the history of God's people because they will occur to your own minds.

Often did they cry out, "Thou art the God that doeth wonders! Who is like unto thee?" Do you think the Israelites when they stood by the Red Sea ever imagined they would walk through it dry-shod? When they stood on the burning sand did they expect to live under a vast sunshade all day long? yet they did so, for the cloudy pillar screened them from the heat. Did they suppose that their camp would be lit up at night as never canvas city had been lighted before, with an illumination brighter than our electric lights can give to us? Yet the flaming column was a grand illumination to them. When they were hungering did they hope to gather angels' bread fresh from the skies? When they were thirsty did they reckon upon a smitten rock yielding an abundant stream? When they were bitten by serpents did they expect that a brazen serpent would work their cure? When they came to the river did they look to see old Jordan retreat before the priests' feet? When they compassed the city of Jericho did they hope to see the wall tumble down about the ears of its inhabitants because the tribes sounded rams'-horns and gave forth a shout? No, the history of Israel is a series of surprises and unexpected mercies. The Lord doeth great marvels, and his people are filled with happy astonishment.

It has been even more so in the works of grace. See what God has done for us in matchless mercy. When he stood at the gates of Eden, and talked with Adam, and cursed the ground for man's sake, could any onlooking angel have imagined that in all this God intended to display the greatness of his mercy, so that where sin abounded grace should much more abound? Did any man, did any angel, did any seraph, ever imagine that the Son of God would come down to be born into this rebel race? Did it ever enter into their conception that he would die, the just for the unjust, to bring men to God? Was it ever thought of that sinful man should be adopted into the divine family? Do you not think it a most amazing thing that sinful men should be born again, and adopted into the family of God?

> "Behold what wondrous grace
> The Father hath bestow'd
> On sinners of a mortal race,
> To call them sons of God!"

This was an honour that we looked not for. Moreover, God having made us to be his children, did we ever look that he would make us his heirs? Yet he saith, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." Did it ever enter into man's heart to conceive that the church should be married to Christ, wedded to him in bands of everlasting love? Did it ever enter the dreams of any intelligent being that God would lift up man, poor, fallen man, to sit in the person of Christ next to himself? Well did David cry, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. This is wonderful.

Brethren, though we think we know what God in grace is doing, I am sure we do not. We shall not know ourselves when we get to heaven, and when we rise from the dead we shall say, "I believed in the resurrection of the dead, but this out-miracles all miracles." When our

Lord shall take us up into the glory, how amazed we shall be! To talk about that glory now doth ravish us, but to be in it, flooded with it, filled with it, crowned with it—this will be overwhelming. Surely we shall need stronger frames, and hearts more able to endure the weight of bliss than those which we now have.

How is it that we continue to be surprised at what God does? I answer, first, because our largest conceptions of God fall short of the truth. The man who has, like Enoch, walked with him for years, yet knows little of him. Ah, my brother, you do not know the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of his wondrous liberality yet. God is infinite. We are as a tiny shell on the beach, we cannot hold the ocean, and therefore the measureless main must always be a marvel to us. We shall always be in a measure ignorant, and as the unknown is gradually revealed it will take us aback with absolute astonishment. Besides, our experience of God is very brief. We have lived as yet only for a span, or a hand's breadth. Even you old men of sixty or seventy years, what are you? Your life has gone like the winking of an eye: it is nothing as compared with the life of God. Therefore there must be in God's dealings a great deal yet to come of which poor, short-lived insects like ourselves can have no idea. Besides that, I am sorry to say our faith is shamefully weak, and does not look out for great things. We have never had such faith in God as he deserves at our hands. We have never believed him for more than twopence, when we ought to have believed in him for all the gold of Ophir. He is worthy of a trust boundless as the sea, and we have scarcely relied upon him beyond the mere drop of a bucket. By doing "exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think," the Lord puts us into an amazed state. It will always be so. Even in heaven we shall still be astonished, as the poet puts it—

> "Then let me mount and soar away
> To the bright world of endless day;
> And sing with rapture *and surprise*,
> His loving-kindness in the skies."

It is a most blessed thing it is so. I am so glad that God does those "things which we looked not for;" because, first, it keeps our life fresh and sweet, and puts far from us monotony and routine. You people who have no God must find life a threadbare tale; one week must be very like another, and one year as another, to you; but some of us can sing—

> "Still has my life new wonders seen."

Novels! I assure you that no novel can equal in interest the unvarnished facts of Christian experience, especially in the case of those who are much tried. Facts surpass fictions in their power to surprise. The makers of romances may rub their foreheads as long as they like, but they cannot invent stories at all comparable to those which happen to us in our ordinary lives. We do not get tired of living, because there is something new every morning in the goodness of the Lord; fresh revelations are brought out by the trials we are called to endure.

Thus he increases our knowledge. When you and I enter upon a new trouble, we ought to fall on our knees and thank God that he is about to

elevate us to a higher grade of discipleship. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. When he puts me to greater pain my Lord thinks me in a fit state to be introduced into an inner chamber. The Christian's experience is like that of the man who is conducted from an outer court into inner rooms, until he reaches the innermost of all. If God opens the first door of gracious knowledge, and lets you in, you are a saved man as soon as you enter by faith; but there is another door, and when you enter in there you are not only saved, but made useful in the saving of others. Yet there is another door, and if God favours you by admitting you into the inner chamber you will be a happy man, mighty in prayer, and confident in hope. Another door stands within this hallowed chamber, and if you can find the keyhole and use the key, you will enter into the secret hall of intimate fellowship with Christ. I do not know how many rooms there are one within another in the place of heavenly wisdom; but this I know, that whenever the Lord is about to introduce his servants into a still more secret chamber where they shall be nearer to himself, he generally sends them a new trial, to test them and to discover whether they can bear a fresh instalment of his revelations of love. Bless the Lord for trials, for they prove the Lord's faithfulness, and endear him to our hearts. He will never lead us into a labyrinth without giving us the clue. Growing trials in God's hand mean growing grace: you were once in a little canoe and you might not leave the tiny stream; but when years had gone by you rowed in a boat upon the river, though you dared not leave the shore: now the Lord has built you a larger vessel, and you make coasting voyages upon the sea; but he does not mean you always to be a mere coaster, carrying a few coals about, he intends you to cross the seas, to brave the ocean, and navigate the globe. As you are gradually fitted for longer voyages, so will you encounter rougher storms, and so will you see more of the works of the Lord and of his wonders in the deep.

Surprising mercies tend to rouse our gratitude. Have we not marvelled at the goodness of the Lord? "Bless the Lord," we have said, "I never dreamed of such love. This way out of my difficulties is excellent, but it is one which I could not have foreseen. I am glad I was brought into straits that I might see how my Lord could bring me out of them." I almost wish I had been with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace. It must have been a fine thing to walk unhurt among those glowing coals, and to come out, and be able to say of all your garments, to your children and your children's children, "These have passed through the fire. See the hose and the hat which I wore amid the flames, there is not a smell of fire upon them." What a wardrobe to pass on to your children's children, to show what the Lord had done! Some of us can do this spiritually, for our hearts are stored with grateful memories.

How much God is glorified by his people when he does things they looked not for. Their neighbours are surprised. As they tell the tale even unbelievers are struck with it, and strangers join to say, "The Lord is good to his people, and his mercy endureth for ever."

Dear friends, I know that some of you can tell of instances in which the presence of God has wrought great surprises for you, and I can join you in doing so. If you have had rich experiences be sure to tell them

to others. Perhaps you remember that a fortnight ago, on the Sabbath morning, I preached of Paul's deep experience, and I said that the experiences of the saints were a treasure, of which they were the trustees, for the benefit of others.* A well-known and beloved brother in Christ was here that morning,—I refer to Mr. W. Haslam, a clergyman of the Church of England,—and he so fully agreed with the remark that he carried it out by sending me a book, in which he has written out the story of the first twenty years of his ministry. I have much enjoyed the reading of the narrative, and to carry out the principle, I will now give you in brief the story of Mr. Haslam's conversion, as an instance of "things which we looked not for." You have all heard of Billy Bray, the Cornish Methodist, who was so mighty in prayer. There was a certain hill that Billy was accustomed to pass, for which he prayed with all his might, till he believed that his heavenly Father had given him that mountain, so that all the souls that lived on it should be saved. He visited all the houses, and obtained a blessing for the inhabitants, but as there were only three houses on the hill he prayed in his own simple way that more might be built. It seemed an odd prayer, and the neighbours did not think it a wise one, but nevertheless it was fulfilled. Some time after when he visited that place he found that Mr. Haslam had built a church and schools there, and his joy was great until he entered the church. At the sight of the surpliced choir and the Ritualistic performance poor Bray was greatly downcast, and said that it was nothing but an "old Pusey." Billy went home and set himself to pray again for that hill, but the fact was quite unknown to those who were the objects of his petitions. Soon the Lord hearkened to the cry of his servant, and it came to pass that the Lord visited Mr. Haslam. His gardener fell sick, and in the time of his illness his churchmanship failed to comfort him; a Methodist brother visited him and was the means of his conversion. When the man told Mr. Haslam that he was converted he was very grieved and disappointed; he felt that he could never make Cornish men into Churchmen; they were confirmed schismatics. His favourite and most promising Churchman had become a Dissenter, and was actually praying that his master might become the same. What was to be done? Mr. Haslam had occasion to visit Mr. Aitken, and told him about the sad defection of the gardener. "Why," said Mr. Aitkin, "you are not converted yourself; I am sure of it, or you would not have come here to complain of your gardener." Conviction came into Haslam's heart, his former hopes vanished, and in sadness he sought the Lord. Mr. Aitken said, "The best thing you can do is to shut the church up, and tell your people you will never preach again till you are converted." He could not do that, but on the Sunday morning he went, ill and sad, to read the prayers, determined to send the people home as soon as they were finished. Instead of that his eye lighted on the text, "What think ye of Christ?" and he thought he would make a few observations upon that question before dismissing the congregation. For the rest I will quote his own words, lest I should seem to colour the incident by telling it in my own language. "As I went on to explain the passage, I saw that the Pharisees and scribes did not know that

* See "Sentence of Death, the Death of Self-Trust." No. 1,536.

Christ was the Son of God, or that he was come to save them. They were looking for a king, the son of David, to reign over them as they were. Something was telling me, all the time, 'You are no better than the Pharisees yourself—you do not believe that he is the Son of God, and that he is come to save you, any more than they did.' I do not remember all I said, but I felt a wonderful light and joy coming into my soul, and I was beginning to see what the Pharisees did not. Whether it was something in my words, or my manner, or my look, I know not; but all of a sudden a local preacher, who happened to be in the congregation, stood up, and putting up his arms, shouted out in Cornish manner, 'The parson is converted! the parson is converted! Hallelujah!' and in another moment his voice was lost in the shouts and praises of three or four hundred of the congregation. Instead of rebuking this extraordinary 'brawling,' as I should have done in a former time, I joined in the outburst of praise; and to make it more orderly, I gave out the Doxology—'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow'—and the people sang it with heart and voice over and over again. When this subsided, I found at least twenty people crying for mercy, whose voices had not been heard in the excitement and noise of thanksgiving. They all professed to find peace and joy in believing. Amongst this number there were three from my own house; and we returned home praising God."

This is a memorable illustration of the statement that when God comes down among a people he does things we looked not for. You may hope that the divine Spirit will still display his power over the most unlikely persons to the glory of his grace. He can save the most obstinate, and bring opposers to the feet of Jesus. Plead with him to do so.

III. Thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF GOD DISSOLVES DIFFICULTIES. I would bring you back to the text again; for perhaps you are beginning to forget it. "When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." This is a blessed sentence, "The mountains flowed down at thy presence." Israel had enemies which were strong and powerful, nations and kings towered above them like great mountains, but whenever God came to help them the kingdoms dissolved, the people were conquered, and the mountains and hills were laid low. At this present time great systems of error oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ: I need not mention them, for they are before us, and seem to rise like giant Alps, overtopping our faith. Blessed be God, the church only needs the divine presence in the midst of her, and all the systems of error will flow down at his feet like glaciers which dissolve in the summer's sun. Perhaps you have seen a volcano when a stream of lava has been pouring down its side, and if so you have had the metaphor of the text before your eye. God does but touch it and the mountain melts and flows away. So will it be with infidelity and superstition, Rationalism and Ritualism, and every form of wrong. If the Holy Spirit clothes the church with power by his presence, the powers of evil will not maintain themselves for an hour, the fire of sacred truth and heavenly life will utterly dissolve them. Many hearts are hard as granite rocks: you may pray for them, talk to them, preach to them, but all in vain. What is required is the presence of God, and then hearts of stone are turned to

flesh, dead souls feel the beating of spiritual life, and corruption is overcome of resurrection power. Do not be afraid, brother. No heart can stand out against the grace of God when it comes in all its power. Do not despair in reference to your prodigal boy: keep on praying, and he will yet come to the house of God with you, and you will sing together the praises of redeeming love. Despair of no one so long as you have a heart to pray.

Within our own selves also we may see mountains of difficulty, but if we go to Christ, and so obtain God's help, every mountain shall sink and every rock melt.

> "Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
> Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
> Dissolved by thy mercy, I fall to the ground,
> And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

There is nothing in you, there is nothing round about you, there is nothing on earth, there is nothing in hell, that can stand against you if you have God on your side, and you have God on your side when you put your trust in Jesus Christ. Between here and the eternal glories of heaven nothing shall ever stand against you if you do but trust in Jesus. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.

IV. Lastly, WE MAY EXPECT TO SEE THE SAME RESULTS FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE TO-DAY, and to-morrow, and as long as we live. God is the same. "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" He is the same conquering Lord. The ages may have degenerated, but God has not degenerated. Do not say that the truth has lost its power. Its power always lay in God, and God is almighty still. He can work miracles to-day if he pleases: he could divide the Atlantic as easily as he did the Red Sea. "With God all things *are* possible," not "were," but "*are*" still.

As to spiritual wonders, people think that Pentecost was with us once, but never can return; but Pentecost was only the Feast of First Fruits, and first fruits predict the harvest. God will do greater things in the latter days than he did at Jerusalem at Pentecost. He says to us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." We do not believe in him. "If the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There is such a microscopic quantity of it that no eyes but his which are like a flame of fire could spy it out. Yet, I say, God is the same, and as worthy to be trusted. And, brethren, we are the same. "No," you say, "we are not, we are not such good men as those who lived in the olden times." I answer that they had the same passions and infirmities as we have now. There was not a morsel of good in the apostles, martyrs, and confessors but what God put there. One earthen vessel is of the same clay as another, and the same God may put the same treasure into one as well as into another. He can bless you and me as he did Peter, James, and John. Human nature is human nature still, both in its degradation and in its possibilities. God can make as much of you, my dear sister, as ever he did of Dorcas, or Mary, or Lydia; and he can make as much of you, my brother, as ever he did of any of the worthies of past times, if you will

but trust him. This feeble arm could slay a thousand men, or pluck up the gates of Gaza, or kill a lion, or pull down a temple upon the Philistines, if God chose to use it as he did Samson's. The Lord has his own choice of instruments, and he can make any instrument fit for his use if he pleases to do so.

Brethren, the promises are the same. "Oh," say you, "how is that? Are not some of them out of date?" No; the covenant is made up of abiding promises, suitable for all ages and all of them are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. We have the sure mercies of David: they stand fast for ever and ever.

Mark you, there are things to be done yet by God which will astonish us beyond measure. We shall cry out against ourselves for our drooping and desponding thoughts; for by-and-by, perhaps ere some of us see death, we shall behold greater things than our fathers saw, and shall clap our hands for very joy. Read the chapter which follows our text, and see what God is going to do. "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." Heathens are to be saved, far off lands will soon be called. Watch for it, work for it, pray for it. Israel is also to be gathered,—"I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." O blessed hour, when the Jew shall worship the Christ whom he crucified! That is not all. There is coming yet—who knoweth how soon?—a new creation. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." There will come a time in which the shortening of life after the deluge shall be remedied. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Yes, and there comes a time of universal peace. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." Verily, verily, I say unto you, this text is true. When God shall do terrible things which we looked not for, he shall come down among us, and the mountains shall flow at his presence. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lxiii. 15—19; lxiv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—114, 63, 30.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23RD, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved; who also leaned on his breast at supper."—John xxi. 20.

Our Lord loved all his disciples:—"having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He said to all the apostles. "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." And yet within that circle of love there was an innermost place in which the beloved John was favoured to dwell: upon the mountain of the Saviour's love there was a knoll, a little higher than the rest of the mount, and there John was made to stand, nearest to his Lord. Let us not, because John was specially loved, think less, even in the slightest degree, of the love which Jesus Christ gave forth to the rest of his chosen. I take it, brethren, that those who display an extraordinary love to one are all the more capable of great affection to many; and therefore, because Jesus loved John most, I have an enhanced estimate of his love to the other disciples. It is not for a moment to be supposed that any one suffered from his supreme friendship for John. John was raised, and they were not lowered, but raised with him. All believers are the dear objects of the Saviour's choice, the purchase of his blood, his portion and inheritance, the jewels of his crown. If in John's case one is greater in love than another, yet all are eminently great, and therefore if it should so happen that you dare not hope to reach the height of John, and cannot look to be distinguished above others as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," yet be very thankful to be among the brotherhood who can each say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." If you have not attained unto the first three, be happy to belong to the host of those who follow the Son of David. It is a matchless privilege, and an unspeakable honour, to enjoy the love of Jesus, even if you march among the rank and file of the armies of love. Our Lord's love to each of us hath in it heights immeasurable and depths unfathomable; it passeth knowledge.

Yet would I not utter this word of good cheer to make you remain at

ense in a low state of grace; far rather would I excite you to rise t the highest point of love; for if already the Lord has loved you with a everlasting love, if already he has chosen you and called you, and kep you and instructed you, and forgiven you, and manifested himself to you why should you not hope that another step or two may yet be taken and that so you may climb to the very highest eminence? Why shoul you not ere long be styled like Daniel, a "man greatly beloved"? o like John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved"?

To be loved as John was, with a special love, is an innermost form o that same grace with which all believers have been favoured. You mus not imagine when I try to exhibit some of the lovable traits of John' character, that I would have you infer that the love of Christ went fort towards John in any other way than according to the law of grace; fo whatever there was that was lovable in John it was wrought in him by the grace of God. Under the law of works John would have bee as surely condemned as any of us, and there was nothing legall deserving in John. Grace made him to differ, just as truly as grac separates the vilest sinner from among the ungodly. Though it b granted that there were certain natural characteristics which mad him amiable, yet God is the creator of all that is estimable in man, and it was not till the natural had been by grace transformed an transfigured into the spiritual that these things became the subject of the complacency of Christ Jesus. Brethren, we do not speak o John to-day as if he were loved because of his works, or stood highe in the heart of Christ on the ground of personal merit, whereof he migh glory. He, like all the rest of his brethren, was loved of Jesus becaus Jesus is all love, and chose to set his heart upon him. Our Lord exercised a sovereignty of love, and chose John for his own name's sake; and yet at the same time there was created in John much that was a fi object for the love of Christ. The love of Jesus was shed abroad in John's heart, and thus John himself was made fragrant with delightfu odours. It was all of grace: the supposition of anything else is out o place. I look upon this special form of our Lord's love as one of thos "best gifts" which we are bidden earnestly to covet—but a gift most emphatically, and not a wage or a purchasable commodity. Love is not bought. It never talks of price or claim. Its atmosphere is free favour. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." The supremest love is to be sought for, then, after the analogy of grace, as gracious men seek greater grace, and not as legalists chaffer and bargain for reward and desert. If ever we reach the upper chambers of love's palace love herself must lead us up the stairs, yea, and be to our willing feet the staircase itself. O for the help of the Holy Spirit while we speak upon such a theme.

I. And now, to come nearer to the text, first, dear friends, LET US CONSIDER THE NAME ITSELF,—"The disciple whom Jesus loved."

Our first observation upon it is,—*it is a name which John gives to himself.* I think he repeats it five times. No other writer calls John "the disciple whom Jesus loved": John has thus surnamed himself, and all the early writers recognize him under that title. Do not suspect him, however, of egotism. It is one of the instances in which egotism is quite out of the question. Naturally, you and I would be rather slow to take

such a title, even if we felt it belonged to us, because we should be ashamed for our repute and be afraid of being thought presumptuous; but with a sweet *naiveté* which makes him quite forget himself, John took the name which he knew most accurately described him, whether others cavilled at it or no. So far from there being any pride in it, it just shows the simplicity of his spirit, the openness, the transparency of his character, and his complete self-forgetfulness. Knowing it to be the truth he does not hesitate to say it: he was sure that Jesus loved him better than others, and, though he wondered at it more than anyone else did, yet he so rejoiced in the fact that he could not help publishing it whatever the consequences to himself might be. Often there is a deal more pride in not witnessing to what God has done for us than in speaking of it. Everything depends upon the spirit which moves us. I have heard a brother with the deepest humility speak with full assurance of the divine love, and while some have thought that he was presumptuous, I have felt within myself that his positive testimony was perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and that it was his simple modesty which made the man so utterly forget himself as to run the risk of being thought forward and egotistical. He was thinking of how he should glorify God, and the appearance of glorifying himself did not alarm him, for he had forgotten himself in his Master. I wish we could bear to be laughed at as proud for our Lord's sake. We shall never have John's pride till like John we dare wear it without a blush.

It is a name in which John hides himself. He is very chary of mentioning John. He speaks of "another disciple," and "that other disciple," and then of "that disciple whom Jesus loved." These are the names by which he would travel through his own gospel "incognito." We find him out, however, for the disguise is too thin, but still he intends to conceal himself behind his Saviour; he wears his Master's love as a veil, though it turns out to be a veil of light. He might have called himself if he had chosen, "that disciple who beheld visions of God," but he prefers to speak of love rather than of prophecy. In the early church we find writings concerning him, in which he is named, "that disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom," and this he mentions in our text. He might have been called "that disciple who wrote one of the gospels," or "that disciple who knew more of the very heart of Christ than any other"; but he gives the preference to love. He is not that disciple who did anything, but who received love from Jesus; and he is not that disciple who loved Jesus, but "whom Jesus loved." John is the man in the silver mask; but we know the man and his communications, and we hear him say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

The name before us is *a name in which John felt himself most at home.* No other title would so well describe him. His own name, "John," means the "gift of God," and he was a precious gift from God the Father to his suffering Son, and a great comfort to the Saviour during the years of his abode among men. Jesus doubtless counted him to be his Jonathan, his John, his God gift, and he treasured him as such; but John does not so much think of his being of any service to his Lord, as of that which his Lord had been to him. He calls himself "that disciple

whom Jesus loved," because he recognized the delightful obligation which springs out of great love, and wished ever to be under its royal influence. He looked on Jesus' love as the source and root of everything about himself which was gracious and commendable. If he had any courage, if he had any faithfulness, if he had any depth of knowledge, it was because Jesus had loved these things into him. All the sweet flowers which bloomed in the garden of his heart were planted there by the hand of Christ's love, so when he called himself "that disciple whom Jesus loved," he felt that he had gone to the root and bottom of the matter, and explained the main reason of his being what he was.

This endearing name was very precious to him, because it evoked the sunniest memories of all his life. Those short years in which he had been with Jesus must have been looked upon by him in his old age with great transport, as the crown and glory of his earthly existence. I do not wonder that he saw Christ again in Patmos, after having seen him once in Palestine as he did see him; for such sights are very apt to repeat themselves. Such sights, I say; for John's view of his Lord was no ordinary one. There is at times an echo to sights as well as to sounds; and he who saw the Lord with John's eagle eye, with his deep-seated inner eye, was the likeliest man in all the world to see him over again in vision as he did see him amidst the rocks of the Ægean Sea. All the memories of the best part of his life were awakened by the name which he wore, and by its power he oft renewed that intimate communion with the living Christ which had lived on during the horrors of the crucifixion, and lasted to the end of his days. That charming name set all the bells of his soul a-ringing: does it not sound right musically?—"The disciple whom Jesus loved."

That name was a powerful spring of action to him as long as he lived. How could he be false to him who had loved him so? How could he refuse to bear witness to the gospel of the Saviour who had loved him so? What leagues of journeying could be too long for the feet of that disciple whom Jesus loved? What mobs of cruel men could cow the heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved? What form of banishment or death could dismay him whom Jesus loved? No, henceforth in the power of that name John becomes bold and faithful, and he serves his loving Friend with all his heart. I say, then, that this title must have been very dear to John, because he felt himself most at home in it; the secret springs of his nature were touched by it, he felt his whole self, heart, soul, mind, memory, all comprehended within the compass of the words, "The disciple whom Jesus loved."

It was a name which was never disputed. You do not find any one complaining of John for thus describing himself. General consent awarded him the title. His brethren did quarrel with him a little when his fond mother, Salome, wanted thrones for her two sons on the right and the left hand of the Messiah; but the love of Jesus to John never caused any illwill amongst the brethren, nor did John take any undue advantage of it. I believe that the apostles tacitly acknowledged that their Lord was perfectly right in his choice. There was something about John which made his brethren love him, and therefore they did not marvel that their Lord should make him his most intimate friend. The truly [illegible]ved one of God generally receives the love of his brethren, ay, and even

the love of the ungodly after a sort; for when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. While David walked with God all Israel loved him, and even Saul was forced to cry, "Thou art more righteous than I." John was so loving that he gained love everywhere. We may well be eager after this choice blessing, since it alone of all known treasures excites no envy among the brethren, but the rather makes all the godly rejoice. Inasmuch as saints wish to be greatly loved themselves, they are glad when they meet with those who have obtained that blessing. If we would ourselves smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, we are glad to meet with those whose garments are already fragrant. You never find John lecturing his brethren, or acting as a lord over God's heritage, but in all gentleness and lowliness he justified the affection which our Lord manifested toward him.

II. Thus much, then, with regard to the name. Secondly, LET US LOOK AT THE CHARACTER WHICH LAY BELOW IT. I can only give a miniature of John: it is quite impossible in the few moments of a sermon to draw a full-length portrait; and, indeed, I am not artist enough to accomplish it if I should attempt the task. In the character of John we see much that is admirable.

First, let us look at *his personality as an individual.* His was a large and warm heart. Perhaps his main force lies in the intensity of his nature. He is not vehement, but deep and strong. Whatever he did he did right heartily. He was simple-minded, a man in whom there was no guile: there was no division in his nature, he was one and indivisible in all that he felt or did. He did not entertain questions, he was not captious, he was not apt to spy out faults in others, and as to difficulties, mental or otherwise, he seems to have been happily without them. Having pondered and come to a conclusion, his whole nature moved in solid phalanx with forceful march; whichever way he went he went altogether, and right resolutely. Some men go two ways, or they tack about, or they go towards their object in an indirect manner; but John steams straight forward, with the fires blazing and the engine working at full speed. His whole soul was engaged in his Lord's cause, for he was a deep thinker, a silent student, and then a forceful actor. He was not impetuous with the haste of Peter, but yet he was determined and thorough-going, and all on fire with zeal.

He was exceedingly vivid in his beliefs, and believed to the utmost what he had learned of his Lord. Read his Epistle through, and see how many times he says "we know," "we know," "we know." There are no "ifs" about him; he is a deep and strong believer. His heart gives an unfeigned assent and consent.

Withal there was an intense warmth about John. He loved his Lord, he loved his brethren; he loved with a large heart, for he had a grand nature. He loved constantly, and he loved in such a way as to be practically courageous for his Master, for he was a bold man, a true son of thunder. He was ready to go to the front if he was bound to do so, but it is in quite a quiet way, and not with a rush and a noise: his is not the dash of a cataract, but the still flow of a deep river.

Putting all together that we know about his personality, we look upon him as a man who was the reverse of your cold, calculating, slow-moving son of diffidence. You know the sort of persons I mean, very good people

in their way, but by no means fascinating, or much to be imitated. He was quite the reverse of those dried, juiceless brethren who have no human nature in them—men who are somewhere about perfect, for they have not life enough to sin. They do no wrong, for they do nothing at all. I know a few of those delightful people, sharp critics of others and faultless themselves, with this one exception, that they are heartless. John was a hearty man: a man of brain, but of soul too—a soul which went out to the tips of his fingers, a man who was permeated with intense but quiet life: a man to be loved. His life was not that of an ice-plant, but of the red rose. He carried summer in his countenance, energy in his manner, steady force in all his movements. He was like that other John of whom he was once a disciple, "a burning and a shining light." There was warmth as well as light in him. He was intense, sincere, and unselfish by nature, and a fulness of grace came upon him and sanctified these virtues.

Let us now view him *in his relation to his Lord.* The name he takes to himself is "*the disciple* whom Jesus loved." Jesus loved him as a disciple. What sort of disciples do masters love? You that have ever been teachers of youth know that if teachers had their choice certain persons would be selected before others. If we teach we love teachable people: such was John. He was a man quick to learn. He was not like Thomas, slow, argumentative, cautious; but having once assured himself that he had a true teacher, he gave himself right up to him, and was willing to receive what he had to reveal.

He was a disciple of very keen eye, seeing into the soul of his instructor's teaching. His emblem in the early church was the eagle,—the eagle which soars, but also the eagle which sees from afar. John saw the spiritual meaning of types and emblems; he did not stop at the outward symbols, as some of the disciples did, but his penetrating soul read into the depths of truth. You can see this both in his gospels and in his epistles. He is a spiritually minded man; he stays not in the letter, but he dives beneath the surface. He pierces through the shell, and reaches the inner teaching. His first master was John the Baptist, and he was so good a disciple that he was the first to leave his teacher. You hint that this did not show that he was a good disciple. Indeed it did, for it was the Baptist's aim to send his followers to Jesus. The Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and John was so good a follower of the forerunner that he immediately followed the Lord himself, to whom the forerunner introduced him. This he did without a violent jerk: his progress was natural and even. Paul came to Jesus with a great start and twist, when he was put upon the lines on the road to Damascus: but John glided gently to the Baptist and then from the Baptist to Jesus. He was not obstinate, neither was he weak, but he was teachable, and so he made steady progress in his learning: such a disciple is one that a teacher is sure to love, and John was therefore "the *disciple* whom Jesus loved."

He was full of faith to accept what he was taught. He believed it, and he believed it really and thoroughly. He did not believe as some people do, with the finger-ends of their understanding, but he gripped the truth with both hands, laid it up in his heart, and allowed it to flow from that centre, and saturate his whole being. He was a believer in

his inmost soul; both when he saw the blood and water at the cross, and the folded grave-clothes at the sepulchre, he saw and believed.

His faith wrought in him a strong and enduring love, for faith worketh by love. He believed in his Master in a sweetly familiar way, "for there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." Such a trustful, confiding disciple is sure to be loved of his teacher.

John had great receptiveness. He drank in what he was taught. He was like Gideon's fleece, ready to be saturated with the dew of heaven. His whole nature absorbed the truth as it is in Jesus. He was not a great talker: I should think he was almost a silent disciple. So little did he say that we have only one saying of his recorded in the gospels. "Why," saith one, "I remember two or three." Do you remind me that he asked that he might sit on the right hand of Christ? I have not forgotten that request, but I answer that his mother, Salome, spoke on that occasion. Again, you tell me that at the supper he asked, "Lord, who is it?" Yes, but it was Peter who put that question into his mouth. The only utterance that I remember in the gospel which was altogether John's, is that at the sea of Tiberias, when he said to Peter, "It is the Lord." This was a very significant little speech—a recognition of his Lord such as the quick eye of love is sure to make. He who lived nearest to Jesus could best discern him as he stood upon the shore. "It is the Lord," is the gladsome cry of love, overjoyed at the sight of its Beloved. It might have served John as his motto—"It is the Lord." O that we were able amid darkness and tossing to discern the Saviour, and rejoice in his presence. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; and such was the beloved disciple.

One great trait in John's character as a disciple was his intense love for his teacher; he not only received the truth, but he received the Master himself. I take it that the leaning of a man's faults often betrays his heart more than his virtues. It may seem a strange observation to make, but it is true. A true heart may as well be seen in its weakness as in its excellence. What were the weak points about John, as some would say? On one occasion he was intolerant. Certain persons were casting out devils, and he forbad them because they followed not with the disciples. Now, that intolerance, mistaken as it was, grew out of love to his Lord; he was afraid that these interlopers might set up as rivals to his Lord, and he wanted them to come under the rule of his beloved Jesus. At another time the Samaritans would not receive them, and he asked his Master that he might call down fire from heaven on them. One does not commend him, but still it was love to Jesus which made him indignant at their ungenerous conduct to their best friend. He felt so indignant that men should not entertain the Saviour who had come into the world to bless them that he would even call fire from heaven: it showed his burning love for Jesus. Even when his mother asked that he and the brother might sit upon thrones at the right hand and the left hand of Christ, it was a deep and thoughtful faith in Jesus which suggested it. His idea of honour and glory was bound up with Jesus. If he gives way to ambition it is an ambition to reign with the despised Galilean. He does not want a throne unless it be at his Leader's side. Moreover, what faith there was in that request! I am not going to justify it, but I am going to say something to moderate

your condemnation. Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem to be spa upon, and to be put to death, and yet John so thoroughly threw him self into his Lord's career that he would fain share in the fortune of hi great Cæsar, assured that it must end in his enthronement. He i content, he says, to be baptized with his baptism, and to drink of his cup; he only asks to share with Jesus in all things. As a good writer says, it reminds one of the courage of the Roman who when Rome was in the hands of the enemy purchased a house within the walls: John heroically asks for a throne at the side of one who was about to die on the cross, for he feels sure that he will triumph. When the cause and kingdom of Christ seemed ready to expire, yet so whole-hearted was John in his faith in God and his love to his beloved Lord, that his highest ambition was still to be with Jesus and take shares with him in all that he would do and be. So, you see, all through he loved his Lord with all his heart, and therefore Jesus Christ loved him: or let me turn it the other way,—the Lord loved John, and therefore he loved the Lord Jesus. It is his own explanation of it,—"We love him because he first loved us."

I must ask you to look at John once more, *as an instructed person*. He was a beloved disciple, and remained a disciple, but he grew to know more and more, and in that capacity I would say of him, that doubtless our Lord Jesus loved him because of the tenderness which was produced by grace out of his natural warmth. How tender he was to Peter, after that apostle's grievous fall, for early in the morning John goes with him to the sepulchre. He is the man who restored the backslider. He was so tender that our Lord did not say to John, "Feed my lambs"; for he knew he would be sure to do it; and he did not even say to him, "Feed my sheep," as he did to Peter,—he knew that he would do so from the instincts of his loving nature. He was a man who under the tutorship of Christ grew, moreover, to be very spiritual and very deep. The words he uses in his epistles are mostly monosyllables, but what mighty meanings they contain. If we may compare one inspired writer with another, I should say that no other evangelist is at all comparable to him in depth. The other evangelists give us Christ's miracles, and certain of his sermons, but his profound discourses, and his matchless prayer, are reserved for that disciple whom Jesus loved. Where the deep things of God are concerned there is John, with sublime simplicity of utterance, declaring unto us the things which he has tasted and handled.

Of all the disciples John was most Christlike. Like will to like. Jesus loved John for what he saw of himself in him, created by his grace. Thus I think you will see that, without supposing John to have possessed any merit, there were points in his personal character, in his character as a disciple, and in his character as an educated, spiritual man, which justified our Saviour in making him the object of his most intimate affection.

III. Very briefly, in the third place, LET US REVIEW THE LIFE WHICH GREW OUT OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY LOVE OF CHRIST.

What was the life of John? First, it was a life of *intimate communion*. John was wherever Christ was. Other disciples are put away, but Peter and James and John are present. When all the disciples sit at the table, even Peter is not nearest to the Lord Jesus, but John leans his head upon his bosom. Their intercourse was very near

and dear. Jesus and John were David and Jonathan over again. If you are a man greatly beloved you will live in Jesus, your fellowship will be with him from day to day.

John's was a life of *special instruction*. He was taught things which no others knew, for they could not bear them. At the latter end of his life he was favoured with visions such as even Paul himself, though not a whit behind the chief of the apostles, had never seen. Because of the greatness of his Lord's love to him he showed him future things, and lifted up the veil so that he might see the kingdom and the glory. They shall see most who love most; they shall be taught most who most completely give up their hearts to the doctrine.

John henceforth became a man in whose life there was *amazing depth*. If he did not say much as a rule while his Lord was with him, he was taking it all in for future use. He lived an inner life. He was a son of thunder, and could boldly thunder out the truth, because, as a thunder-cloud is charged with electricity, so had he gathered up the mysterious force of his Lord's life, love, and truth. When he did break out there was a voice like the voice of God in him; a deep, mysterious, overwhelming power of God was about him. What a flash of lightning is the Apocalypse! What awful thunders sleep within the vials and the trumpets! His was a life of divine power because of the great fire which burned within; his was not the flash of crackling thorns beneath a pot, but the glow of coals in a furnace when the whole mass is molten into a white heat. John is the ruby among the twelve, he shines with a warm brilliance reflecting the love which Jesus lavished on him.

Hence his life was one of *special usefulness*. He was entrusted with choice commissions involving high honour. The Lord gave him to do a work of the most tender and delicate kind, which I am afraid he could not commit to some of us. As the Redeemer hung upon the tree dying he saw his mother standing in the throng, and he did not commit her to Peter, but to John. Peter would have been glad of the commission, I am sure, and so would Thomas, and so would James; but the Lord said to John, "Behold thy mother!" and to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. So modest, so retiring, I was going to say so gentlemanly, was John, that he was the man to take charge of a broken-hearted mother. Said I wrong that he was a true gentleman? Divide the word, and surely he was the gentlest of men. John has a delicate air and considerate manner, needful to the care of an honoured woman. Peter is good, but he is rough: Thomas is kind, but cold; John is tender and affectionate. When you love Jesus much he will trust his mother to you; I mean his church and the poorest people in it, such as widows and orphans, and poor ministers. He will trust them to you because he loves you much. He will not put everybody into that office. Some of his people are very hard and stony of heart, and fitter to be tax-collectors than distributors of alms. They would make capital officers in an army, but not nurses in a hospital. If you love Jesus much you shall have many delicate offices to perform which shall be to you proofs of your Lord's trust in you, and renewed tokens of his love.

John's life was, moreover, one of *extraordinary heavenliness*. They call him John the Divine, and he was so. His eagle wings bore him

aloft into the heavenly places, and there he beheld the glory of the Lord. Whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Ephesus or in Patmos, his conversation was in heaven. The Lord's Day found him in the spirit, waiting for him that cometh with clouds,—so waiting that he who is the Alpha and Omega hastened to reveal himself to him. It was the love of his Lord which had thus prepared him for visions of the glory. Had not that love so enkindled his own love as to hold him faithfully at the cross all through the agony, he might never have been able to gaze upon the throne. He had lovingly followed him who had been pointed out to him as the "Lamb of God," and therefore he was made meet to see him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, adored of angels and redeemed saints, whose harps and viols are engrossed with his praise. O that we, too, could be freed from the grossness of earth, and borne aloft into the purer atmosphere of spiritual and heavenly things.

IV. We close by saying, very briefly, LET US LEARN LESSONS FOR OURSELVES from that disciple whom Jesus loved. May the Holy Spirit speak them to our inmost hearts.

First, I speak to those of you who are still young. If you wish to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved" *begin soon.* I suppose that John was between twenty and twenty-five when he was converted; at any rate, he was quite a young man. All the representations of him which have been handed down to us, though I attach no great value to them, yet unite in the fact of his youth. Youthful piety has the most profitable opportunity of becoming eminent piety. If you begin soon to walk with Christ you will improve your pace, and the habit will grow upon you. He who is only made a Christian in the last few years of his life will scarcely reach to the first and highest degree, for lack of time, and from the hampering influence of old habits; but you who begin soon are planted in good soil, with a sunny aspect, and should come to maturity. Soldiers who enlist early under the banner of our David have hope of becoming veterans, and attaining to the first three.

Next, if we would be like John in being loved by Christ, let us *give our heart's best thoughts to spiritual things.* Brethren and sisters, do not stop in the outward ordinance, but plunge into its inner sense. Never allow your soul, on the Lord's Day for instance, to be thankful and happy merely because you have been to the place of worship. Ask yourself, "Did I worship? Did my soul commune with God?" In the use of the two ordinances of baptism and the supper, content not yourself with the shell, but seek to get at the kernel of their inner meaning. Rest not unless the Spirit of God himself dwell within you. Recollect that the letter killeth; it is the spirit that giveth life. The Lord Jesus Christ takes no delight in those who are fond of broad phylacteries, and multiplied sacraments, and holy performances, and superstitious observances. The Father seeketh those to worship him who worship him in spirit and in truth. Be spiritual, and you are among those who are likely to be men greatly beloved.

Next to that, *cherish a holy warmth.* Do not repress your emotions and freeze your souls. You know the class of brethren who are gifted with refrigerating power. When you shake hands with them, you would think that you had hold of a fish: a chill goes to your very soul. Hear them sing. No, you cannot hear them! Sit in the next pew, and you will

ever hear the gentle hiss or mutter which they call singing. Out in their
ops they could be heard a quarter of a mile off, but if they pray in the
eeting, you must strain your ears. They do all Christian service as if
ey were working by the day for a bad master and at scanty wages: when
ey get into the world they work by the piece as if for dear life. Such
rethren cannot be affectionate. They never encourage a young man,
r they are afraid that their weighty commendation might exalt him
bove measure. A little encouragement would help the struggling youth
ightily, but they have none to offer. They calculate and reckon and
ove prudently; but anything like a brave trust in God they set down
s rashness and folly. God grant us plenty of rashness, I say, for what
en think imprudence is about the grandest thing under heaven. En-
usiasm is a feeling which these refrigerators do not indulge. Their chant
, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without
nd. Amen;" but anything like a dash for Christ and a rush for souls
ey do not understand. Mark this, if you trace such brethren home, you
ill find that they have little joy themselves and make very little joy for
thers. They are never quite certain that they are saved, and if they are
ot sure of it we may readily guess that other people are not. They spend
anxious thought the strength which ought to have gone in hearty
ve. They were born at the north pole, and live amid perpetual
ost: all the furs of Hudson's Bay could not warm them. About them
ou see none of the rich tropical flowers which bedeck the heart upon
hich the Sun of Righteousness shines with perpendicular beams. These
illy mortals have never traversed the sunny regions of heavenly love where
he spices of holy delight load all the air, and apples of gold are every-
here within the reach of glowing hearts. The Lord bring us there!
esus Christ loves warm people; he never shines on an iceberg except to
elt it. His own life is so full of love that its holy fire kindles the like
ame in others, and thus he has fellowship with those whose hearts burn
ithin them. The fitness for love is love. To enjoy the love of Jesus
e must overflow with love. Pray for earnest, eager, intense affection.
ay your hearts among the coals of juniper till they melt and glow.

Dear brother, if you want to be the man that Jesus loves, cultivate
trong affection and *let your nature be tender and kind.* The man who
s habitually cross, and frequently angry, cannot walk with God. A man
f a quick, hot temper who never tries to check it, or a man in whom
here is a malicious remembrance of injuries, like a fire smouldering
midst the embers, cannot be the companion and friend of Jesus, whose
pirit is of an opposite character. A pitiful, compassionate, unselfish,
enerous heart is that which our Lord approves. Forgive your fellow as
f you never had anything to forgive. When brethren injure you, hope
hat they have made a mistake, or else feel that if they knew you better
hey would treat you worse. Be of such a mind towards them that you
ill neither give nor take offence. Be willing to lay down, not only your
omfort, but even your life for the brethren. Live in the joy of others,
ven as saints do in heaven. Love others so as to forget your own sorrows.
o shall you become a man greatly beloved.

Last of all, may the Spirit of God help you to *rise to heavenliness.*
o not be miserable money-grubbers, or sordid earth-worms; do not
e pleasure hunters and novelty seekers, do not set your affection

upon these childrens' toys, which will be so soon broken up. Be ye no more children, but men of God. Oh to find your joy in Christ, your wealth in Christ, your honour in Christ, your everything in Christ—this is peace. To be in the world but not to be of it: to linger here as if you were an angel sent from heaven to dwell for a while among the sons of men, to tell them of heaven, and point them the way—this is to abide in Christ's love. To be always ready to fly, to stand on tip-toe, waiting for the heavenward call, to expect to hear the trumpet ring out its clarion note, the trumpet of the coming of your Lord—this is to have fellowship with Christ. Sit loose, I pray you, by this world; get a tighter grip of the world to come—so shall Jesus' love be shed abroad within you. Throw your anchor upward, into the placid sea of divine love, and not like the seamen, downward, into a troubled ocean. Anchor yourselves to the eternal throne, and never be divided even in thought from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May it be my privilege and yours, brothers and sisters, to lean these heads of ours on Jesus' bosom, till the day break and the shadows flee away. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—810, 784, 793.

Mr. SPURGEON has lately preached a sermon to sailors, which is published in a cover, price One Penny. This discourse will be found suitable for distribution among seafaring people, for whom it was lovingly prepared.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MEDIATOR,—JUDGE AND SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 30TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he hich was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all ie prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive mission of sins."—Acts x. 42, 43.

HESE two verses are an extract from a very remarkable sermon, a sermon reached by Peter in the house of Cornelius upon the occasion of the entile Pentecost. I think we are entitled to call the event by that name, r then upon the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. eter preached at the first Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost fell upon the ompany of Jewish believers; and it is remarkable that he should be the reacher at the second Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended upon ose of the uncircumcision while they were listening to the gospel. hilip was at Cæsarea, and might have been called in, but God had de-rmined that the strict Peter, the minister of the circumcision, should imself open the door of faith to the Gentiles. Paul was at that time nverted, and it might have seemed to be more appropriate to have sed him in enlightening this Italian officer, but the Lord thought not): he would send the Spirit upon the Gentiles in connection with the me person who preached when this visitation blessed the converts of rael. Peter preached as it were upon the ruins of the middle wall of artition which once divided the sons of men.

The occasion was very special, and hence the sermon is the more orthy of our earnest consideration. What kind of discourse is that hich is likely to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? We may learn some-ing upon that point from the instance before us.

Notice that it was a sermon "preached by request." I have seen those ords printed upon the title page of very poor sermons, as a sort of pology for their being printed. I have wondered who it was that did quest them, and whether the requesters were pleased with what they ot by their petition. I should think that they would hardly have ked that the same words should be spoken unto them again. But is request was a very honest and hearty one, for Cornelius sent many iles to fetch the preacher, and the preacher came a long day's journey order to deliver his discourse. It were devoutly to be wished that

many such sermons would both be preached and published by request. When men are anxious to hear such discourses, and count the preacher to be their benefactor, there is every hope that the truth will work their salvation.

This discourse was delivered to a model congregation. One might be satisfied to preach in the middle of the night to such an assembly, for a devout family had come together at the earnest request of a leading kinsman to have the gospel preached to them. To that assembly not a single person came in late: every one was there before the speaker arrived. Late attendance frequently means heartless worship, disturbance, and distraction. "Now, therefore," said Cornelius before Peter began, "are we all here present before God?" This was well: O that all hearers were punctual, that all worship might be undisturbed. Better still would it be if all our audiences felt that they were "before God:" this would create a solemn feeling and ensure devout attention. The hearers were all in a waiting and expectant mood, and all in a receptive condition, desiring, as Cornelius said, "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Never was the ground better ploughed, nor in a finer condition for receiving the living seed.

Peter gave them a very plain and simple sermon: you cannot find a flourish in it, nor a metaphor, nor even the least attempt at oratory, as indeed you do not find in the sermons of inspired men. Those gentlemen who preach grandiloquently are uninspired, you may depend upon that, or else they would not attempt the high and mighty style. The inspiration which the Holy Ghost gives leads men to use great plainness of speech. Not in words only was Peter plain, but the truths which he taught were the first principles of the faith, and it is generally by these that men are saved: points of difficult theology are not often the means of conversion. What have we to do with the fireworks of rhetoric, or the playthings of controversy, when men are anxious to know the way of salvation? Simple as the discourse was it was a very powerful one; so powerful, indeed, that all that heard it were converted. I do not see any intimation that one of them remained unconvinced; for the forty-fourth verse says, "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." What a very remarkable occasion was this, when all who heard the truth felt the power of the Holy Spirit. What would I not give to be enabled to preach after that fashion, and to see such a result?

This sermon, however, was never finished: it remains for ever a homiletical fragment, a broken column of the temple of wisdom, a discourse of which we shall never know the conclusion intended by its author. I am sure that Peter felt full of matter that day, for so a minister usually feels when he knows that he is sent by the Lord himself with a special commission, and sees a people with open heart receiving all that he utters. He then feels like a vessel wanting vent, his heart is inditing a good matter, his tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Yet the sermon was never finished, but closed abruptly. Oh that our sermons were incomplete for the same cause that Peter's was; for the Holy Spirit, who speaketh better by himself than by the most earnest voice, caused a divinely joyful interruption:—"The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The sermon was stopped while they heard the converts speak with tongues, and magnify God, and the

preacher did not return to his sermon, but together with his converts attended to baptism and then enjoyed holy fellowship. Oh that the Spirit of God would in the same manner interrupt us! We have too much talk, and too little of those blessed silences which he is sure to cause. It were better for our lips to be sealed by the hour than for us to speak except as he opens our mouth to show forth the praises of the Lord. A sacred irregularity would be far better in our public services than the prim monotony of death. For all these reasons I think I have a claim upon your very earnest attention while we look at Peter's sermon more intently: surely a sermon produced under such circumstances, leading up to such results, and interrupted so divinely, deserves to be reverently studied.

What was the subject? What was Peter preaching upon? He was preaching Christ and him crucified. No other subject ever does produce such effects as this. The Spirit of God bears no witness to Christless sermons. Leave Jesus out of your preaching, and the Holy Spirit will never come upon you. Why should he? Has he not come on purpose that he may testify of Christ? Did not Jesus say, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"? Yes, the subject was Christ, and nothing but Christ, and such is the teaching which the Spirit of God will own. Be it ours never to wander from this central point: may we determine to know nothing among men but Christ and his cross.

I think there were six heads in the sermon, though he spoke only of one subject, that is, Christ. The apostle spake of the Lord's *person*. I will not enlarge, but simply give you his words. He said, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is Lord of all." He did not teach the Socinian gospel, which sets forth a Christ who is not God. We love "the man Christ Jesus," but we cannot endure the doctrine that he is no more than man. How could he save us? Could a mere man redeem us? "He is Lord of all," and because he is thus supreme we feel we can trust him with the salvation of our souls. Peter is very clear upon the sovereign Godhead of Jesus. His words are few, but they are exceedingly explicit. Having spoken of his person, he then spoke of his *life*, and what a pithy summary it is: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." There was the spring of his life's power, his anointing from the Holy Ghost, who bare witness of him in Jordan and at other times. He saith, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the Lord hath anointed me." The tenor of his life is set out in the next sentence, "Who went about doing good." That one stroke gives a full portrait of Christ. You have summed up in that sentence the biography of Jesus as he lived among men: he was an itinerant missionary, a travelling preacher, a general benefactor, and "he went about doing good." Then Peter passed on to his third point, which was the Saviour's *death*, of which he says, "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree." He does not take away the offence of the cross, nor put it in smooth language, as some would have done; but he confesses that they hanged him on a tree. Hanging or crucifixion was an accursed and shameful death in the judgment of all mankind, and Peter confesses that his Lord thus died: there is no concealing, or even veiling of the matter; he acknowledges that he died

by hanging upon a tree. I rejoice in this bold telling out of the doctrine of the cross in what some may call its baldness, but in what we will regard as its sublime simplicity. In Christ's death the shame is honour, and the disgrace renown: to deck the cross with flowers and make crucifixion honourable is to rob the august transaction of its leading element, namely, the endurance of shame because of man's shameful sin. Then Peter passed on to our Lord's *resurrection*, for that is an essential part of the gospel, and the gospel is not preached where a risen Christ is forgotten. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly." It was no fiction; he was openly shown on many occasions to those best able to recognize him. The risen Christ was seen, and seen clearly, yea, and spoken with, and touched with finger and hand by his disciples. He was not shown to all the people, for he was not to be exhibited to gratify curiosity, but to secure faith. The evidence of five hundred persons is quite sufficient to the establishment of an historical fact, and perhaps better for the purpose than the witness of unnumbered crowds. If you suppose those five hundred to have been deceived, you would just as readily believe that a whole nation was mistaken. Had the nation of the Jews received the truth of Christ's resurrection they could not have given us better evidence than we have already that Christ is risen: rather it would have been said,—This is all an Israelitish fable: the Jewish nation, prejudiced in their own favour, have banded together to maintain the fiction of a risen Messiah in order to add to their own national repute. There is something far more convincing in the testimony of men who themselves were persecuted and put to death for bearing such witness, and died adhering unaminously to the truth of their common testimony. God gave to the whole world sufficient evidence to establish the resurrection of Christ, for many did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. Then Peter came to the last two points of his sermon, which were, *the judgment*, which he felt it necessary to preach—declaring that Jesus Christ who died and rose again is now designated the Judge of all mankind: and lastly, as the gem of all, Peter preached *salvation* by the Lord Jesus most fully and graciously when he said, "Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." This was what he was driving at; and when he had reached this point enough truth had been taught to save a soul, and God, the Holy Spirit, at once used it.

I purpose this morning to confine your attention to those last two points of Peter's sermon, for I am sure that there is much profitable matter in them. Not that I intend to bring out the meaning of each of these verses separately so much as the connection of the two, to show how Christ's being made Judge of all mankind has a connection with his being the Saviour of all those who believe in him, to whom he forgives their sins. May God bless the meditation to our souls' profit.

I. OUR DIVINE MEDIATOR'S POSITION INVOLVES TWO OFFICES. We are not now living under the immediate government of God, but under the reign of Jesus Christ the Mediator; for God hath committed all judgment unto the Son. Jesus now reigns, according to the word of the psalmist, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." We are living under a mediatorial dispensation, in which all power is delivered unto Jesus in heaven and in earth. God shineth upon us now

through the person of his dear Son, not therefore with those fierce and strong beams which in justice must have consumed us, but through the medium of the accepted person of Jesus; with mild, soft, genial radiance for our comfort and our salvation. Inasmuch as Christ has thus received mediatorial power in its fulness, there are two offices in it.

The first is that of Judge, and the second is that of Saviour. First, Jesus Christ as mediator has become our *Judge*. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ;" mark that—"*of Christ*." Jesus of Nazareth has become "Judge of quick and dead." In this capacity he has judicial authority over all mankind. Offences now are offences against him, transgressions against the royal Son of God. He has authority over men, and he will try all of us at the last, as he is even now sitting in judgment upon all our acts and thoughts and intents. We shall all have to stand before him, "that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." He will sum up the evidence and decide the doom of all. We shall each one appear before his great white throne, and he shall divide the nations as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. If any are condemned, his lips shall say, "Depart, ye cursed": if any are glorified, from his lips shall proceed the sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Yes, he that hung upon the cross sitteth now as King upon the holy hill of Zion, and he must reign till all his enemies are made his footstool, and he must come a second time without a sin-offering unto the judgment of mankind. That judgment of our Saviour's will be authoritative and final, and it will concern all the race of Adam. It is of divine appointing and can never be questioned, for God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." The Lord Jesus is Judge of the quick, that is, of the living, and of the dead. All that will be alive at his coming, kings and peasants, professing saints and avowed sinners, must alike stand before his bar; and all the myriads whose mouldering bodies have turned the world into one huge graveyard must live again, and all answer to his trumpet summons. The Jews that accused him, the Romans that executed him, the ancient Gentiles that persecuted his apostles, the scoffers of modern times who ridicule his claims, all kings and patriarchs before the flood, with all the numerous host destroyed by the deluge, and the myriads upon myriads of all the nations that have come and gone since then, and all that shall come and shall yet go, must all without exception put in a personal appearance before the bar of the Nazarene, who is also the Son of God. This is part of his work as Mediator between God and man, and well will he discharge the solemn trust.

The second part of his office is to be a *Saviour*, "that through his name whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins." He is a Prince and a Saviour; power in him attends his grace. He has the sovereign right of condemnation or justification: the final judgment

is with him: he saith, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be." The powers of life and death are entrusted to Jehovah Jesus, the Son of God. He has authority to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin in his own name, as in the name of the Eternal God. His atonement has made it possible for him to do this in perfect consistency with his character as Judge: he pardons, and when he pardons it is as just an act as when he condemns. If this seem a paradox to you, read the New Testament, and see how he can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth: see how it is that in the atoning sacrifice "righteousness and peace have kissed each other," and how God is severely just in all that he does, and yet aboundeth towards believers in richness of grace in passing by their sin.

It seems to me to be a very blessed thought that the same universality which pervades the Mediator's dignified proceedings as judge, is to be seen in his condescending operations as Saviour; for it is not to the Jews alone that he has come, though to them he is preached; would God they did receive him: but he is come to the Gentiles also, that "whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Now, there is neither black nor white, nor male nor female, nor rich nor poor with him: humanity is one great family fallen, and out of it shall arise a great family restored, who come and trust the Saviour. Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. As well of the ages past was he the Saviour of believers as of this age and of ages yet to come: he is mighty always to save; the anointed Saviour, yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same. See ye then, because Christ is the Interposer, and has intervened between God and man, and has royal authority so to do, he therefore takes upon himself the double work of judging and of pardoning. Let the two works dwell together in your minds: "He is a just God and a Saviour."

II. Kindly follow me in the next consideration: BOTH THESE OFFICES REGARD MEN AS SINNERS. I am sick to the death of hearing men talk about the goodness which is latent in human nature. I read the other day an instruction to missionaries, that when they go to a foreign land they should always believe that men are good, that there is a natural religiousness in them, which, like sparks in the embers, only needs blowing up a little, and it will certainly flame up into a wonderful fire of true devotion, and so on. Pooh! There not a word of truth in all this flattery. No doctrine could be more untrue to the very existence of Christ. If natural religion would have sufficed, why need a divine Saviour to have descended among us? The best that the light of nature can do falls short of righteousness. The case of Cornelius in the chapter we have been reading makes it evident that the best natural religion needs to be illuminated by revelation and instructed by the doctrine of the cross; for there is Cornelius, a man worshipping the true God devoutly, and living correctly, and yet what must be done for him? Is he to be saved without Christ? Is he to find his own way to life by the development of his good qualities? No, but he must be told to fetch Peter, to tell him about Jesus the Saviour, and if no other means will answer an angel must descend to guide him to the appointed teacher. When he had gone as far as he could go, it became essential that he should hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, it is clear as noonday that if for this

cases the gospel was absolutely needful, it must assuredly be
l by the myriads who are not so excellent.

ıren, Jesus Christ comes to judge mankind because there are
to be judged. If you find me a nation which has no tribunals,
ishments, no courts of justice, no judges, it must either be the
utter anarchy or else a nation where all obey the law, and such
as a criminal is unknown. The setting up of the last great assize,
making of that assize to have reference to all men, the quick and
l, and the appointment of the supremest person in existence, even
of God, to conduct that assize,—all these facts imply guilt some-
and abundance of it. If it is not thereby proved that every one
uick and the dead have offended, it at least implies that they are
r suspicion: that they are all actually guilty we learn from other
of God's word. The judgment held by the Mediator is proof
mediatorial office has reference to sin, and deals with men as
ssors of the law.

second part of our Lord's mediatorial office implies this most cer-
for he comes as Saviour, and such an office would be needless if
ere no sin and ruin; it is idle to talk of saving those who have
llen. He comes to remit sin, but there can be no remission of
those who have never transgressed. The largeness of the promise
d that "whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of
oes to prove that there is sin in everybody. However wide the
ever" is, so wide, depend upon it, is the guilt: the remedy
s the disease. Remission is promised upon belief in Jesus Christ,
fallen man needs to be pardoned.

ng the two things together, the very fact that there is a Mediator
gards man as fallen. God could have dealt with us immediately,
an Intercessor had we been as the first Adam was before his
is by reason of sin's influence upon the race, the fall and cor-
of the progeny of Adam, that it became necessary there should be
man that might lay his hand upon both," and deal with God in
ne person, and yet deal with fallen man in his humanity. Yes,
s Mediator deals with sinners on God's behalf, and the point I
ou practically to note is this—do not let us get away from the
ısness of being sinners, because we must then move away from
he Mediator. In proportion as you set up any righteousness of
rn, in that proportion you become independent of the Saviour,
divided from him. If you deny that you are liable to be
and condemned you will deny also the necessity of your being
, and while denying your guilt you never can be forgiven, for
on of guilt is a necessary preliminary to pardon. "If we con-
sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Put
es, then, with broken hearts beneath the covert of the Saviour's
Come and stand before his majestic judgment-seat and plead
there and then cry, "Remit my sin through thy great sacrifice
cious blood." Do not try to disprove the accusation or to ex-
the guilt, but plead guilty, and, as guilty, sue for a free pardon.
labour against your conscience to deny your sin, but take the
's place and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is
ond point of the text, and it is clear enough. May we be wise

enough to put it into practice. May the Holy Spirit work in us a tender, humble, and contrite spirit.

III. Notice a third consideration: THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY OUR LORD AS MEDIATOR TO FULFIL HIS FIRST OFFICE OF JUDGE MATERIALLY COMFORT US IN LOOKING AT HIM UNDER HIS SECOND OFFICE AS SAVIOUR.

Note, then, first, that as Judge the Lord Jesus *has full authority*: he is fully commissioned of God to acquit or to condemn. Oh, then, if he gives me pardon through his blood it is an authorised pardon, it is a free pardon under the King's own hand and seal. I rejoice to think of this. If Jesus the Judge had said, "Depart, ye cursed," I should be certain that it was true and sure, though I sank into unutterable despair for ever; and even so when he saith, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins," I am equally certain that his sentence is sure and fixed. Therefore, being justified by such a justifier, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The pardon is as authorized as the condemnation would have been. Is not this sweet to think on? Is not this a solid pillar for hope to rest upon?

In order that our Lord might be a competent Judge, he *possesses the amplest knowledge*. A judge should be the most instructed among men, or otherwise he is not fit to decide in matters of great difficulty and importance. Jesus Christ as Judge is incomparably fit to judge men, for he knows men thoroughly. He is himself a man, and therefore he knows our temptations, and our weaknesses, in fact, he knows all about us by experience as well as by observation. He carries a man's heart within him to the judgment-seat, and in man's nature he sits there, to weigh us in the balances of truth. This fits him to judge the world with equity. Next, he knows the law. Hath he not said, "Yea, thy law is within my heart"? No one knows the law of God as Jesus did, for he kept it in every point: he has not merely read it and learned it, but obeyed it to the full. The law is written out in living characters in his holy life and obedient death. How qualified he is to judge, since he is Master of every line in the royal statute book! Moreover, he knows what sin is—not that he ever sinned, but he has lived among sinners as a Physician, and studied their complaints, making a specialty of the disease of sin. Though he had no sin of his own, yet all sin was laid on him. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The Lord Jesus also knows the punishment of sin. A judge must know what penalties to award. Jesus knows this well enough, for he himself also hath once suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He knows the deserved penalty of human guilt, for on his shoulders the ploughers made deep furrows, and his very soul was crushed within him in the winepress of divine wrath.

Pause here and think awhile. Inasmuch as this knowledge qualifies Christ to be thy Judge, O my soul, it equally qualifies him to pardon thee, for he knows thee thoroughly, and can cleanse thee thoroughly. He knows sin, dear brethren, your sin and mine, so that when he gives pardon it will be of all sin, of all manner of transgressions, iniquities, and crimes, of which all are open before him. He knows the law, and therefore he knows how legally to acquit, so that no further question can be raised. He will make no mistake about the matter, for he knows the

he courts of heaven. Since he knows the penalty, because he
e it all, he will take care that none of it shall ever fall on us.
on of believers is not given by a blind God, nor granted in error:
no flaws in the divine judgment, no schemes and quibbles by
evade the meaning of the statute in that case made and provided,
done in justice and equity. The Lord doth not keep to the ear
h is avoided in fact, but all his judgments are done in truth.
ge of all the earth must do right. If thou hast pardoned me,
, thou hast known what thou hast done, and thou hast done it
ly and well, and wisely, and it will stand in the highest
ainst all gainsayers. I shall not be condemned when I am
nt shall be cleared and justified even before the bar of God, for
rist the Judge himself has put away my sin: see here the full
granted to my faith. Who shall lay anything to the charge of
ct since God hath justified? Do you see this?

I not also see, dear friends, that all the personal qualifications
ord to act as Judge remarkably tend to make the pardon of his
e more blessedly clear; for, first of all, as a Judge he is very
Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God,
hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."
alled Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge
e war." He is impartial and unchanging, and sitting on the
t-seat the highest and noblest qualities of humanity and deity
icuous in him. Well, then, when he forgives it must be just
e: when he pardons us it must be consistent with the holiness
or us to be pardoned. Such an One as he whom God ac-
worthy to judge the sons of men at the last great day, when he
y sins are forgiven thee," has not perverted judgment, nor
ide from right. Our pardon is affirmed and established by the
nd truth of the divine Judge, and its authenticity and correct-
proven by the same attributes. Who can dispute our acquittal
comes from the Judge himself? If you have caught my
and seen the truth, it must tend to your comfort and delight:
mp of judgment, all the authority of the throne, all the justice
tute-book, all the power of the mediatorial government, and all
ess of the Judge himself are engaged to maintain the verdict of
, and make it as firm as the sentence of his wrath. Herein is
r quiet assurance.

Let us next notice the fact, that OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE
FICE OF THE MEDIATOR IS EXCEEDINGLY NECESSARY TO OUR
NCE OF HIM IN HIS SECOND CAPACITY. This was why Peter
it: this was why Paul before Felix reasoned concerning right-
temperance, and judgment to come. This is why the Holy
imself convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of
t. Dear hearer, if you do not believe in Christ as your
u never will accept him as your Saviour. Unless you set
before that awful throne, that great white throne, as John
nd realise yourself as standing there to give in your account,
not fly to the Saviour for mercy. I would have every uncon-
rson set before his mind the hour of his death, the moment
pearance of his naked spirit before the tribunal of Christ, and

then the resurrection and the solemnities of that great day for which all other days are made, when heaven and earth shall pass away and all things melt like dreams, and the only real thing shall be the man, his deeds, his Judge, his future. Oh, think of this! Some of you are unpardoned this morning, and as sure as you live, unless you repent, you will stand before God to receive nothing but condemnation, condemnation irreversible and eternal. Let those who would bewitch you say what they will, you will receive a condemnation which will thunder after you throughout ages without end, to wither all your hopes and dry up the springs of comfort within your nature, and leave you an eternal desolation. I cannot speak upon this topic at any length, the theme is too dreadful. May none of you ever incur the doom of the last day. May it never happen that one who sat in the Tabernacle while we tried to preach the gospel shall be driven by the whirlwind of divine justice away from the presence of God and the glory of his power. And yet it will be so with some of you, I am afraid, for you do not turn to God; you do not seek the Saviour, and you are as likely as not to die in your sins, and, if you do, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation" which must devour you.

Oh that you would feel this, and now under a sense of it come and trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour. He is never dear to any but to sinners. Christ is never valued by any but the guilty. He came into the world to save sinners; it is well he did, for no one else will have him but those who feel their sin and condemnation. Oh, come and take him as your Saviour, and let that blessed word "*Whosoever* believeth in him" be like a wide door to let you in. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"; why should you not at this moment obtain that full remission? Here are some lines which I would have you think upon when you are in your own chambers at home; may their concluding prayer be yours:—

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay!
How shall he meet that dreadful day,
When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll;
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead.

"O! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!"

V. The last observation is that THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL OFFICE IS THAT WHICH CONCERNS US MOST AT THIS PRESENT TIME. What does Jesus do as Mediator? He judges, but he also forgives. Note the words, "Shall receive remission of sins." What is remission of sin? Hear it and be astonished that it is possible: it is the causing of sin to cease to be. Granted that you have sinned; lamented that you have sinned; granted also that your sin deserves the utmost punishment; yet God in wondrous mercy is prepared to forget your sin, to blot it out, to cast it behind his back, to cast it into the

depths of the sea; all which Scriptural expressions go to set forth that he will put it quite away, so that he will regard you as if you had never offended at all. Guilty man, dost thou hear this? You that are not guilty, you self-righteous people, I do not care whether you hear it or not, for Christ did not come to call you, since the whole have no need of a physician, but O, ye guilty ones, who know that you are guilty, listen to this. There is remission, and it is preached to you in Jesus Christ's name. God is a God of mercy, and he passeth by iniquity, transgression, and sin, and the guilty can be justly treated by him as if they were perfectly innocent.

Note this grand fact, and then observe that this is to be done in Christ's name. There is no other name in which pardon can be bestowed, but it can come in the name of Jesus. Without shedding of blood there is no remission, and this blood is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, which cleanseth us from all sin. It is in the name of Jesus the Nazarene, despised and rejected of men, who is also Lord of all,—it is in his name that pardon is freely presented to the most guilty of the human race. Be they where they may, God is ready to kiss away their sins, and to accept them through Jesus Christ.

According to the text this is to be had through faith, for the text saith, "he that believeth on him." The plan is very simple. Every great discovery is very simple when it is complete. Did you ever notice that when a machine is complicated you feel sure that it is only in its infancy? The more perfect it becomes the more simple it becomes, till at last, when there is no improvement to be made, you can see it is so because all complications have been removed. Such is the gospel. It is not a science which needs to be learned at universities: it is not a mysterious doctrine which needs the intellect of a doctor of divinity to grasp it; it is just an A B C gospel which babes often receive when wise men miss it. It is, trust Jesus Christ: trust God in Jesus Christ, and you are reconciled to him, and your sins are blotted out for Christ's sake.

Lastly, this blessed news has reference to every one in the whole world that will believe in Jesus. That great, comprehensive word, "whosoever," is worthy of your devout notice. "Whosoever believeth in him." This excludes no race of men, neither the most degraded Hottentot, nor the most intellectual Hindoo: this shuts out no king, and no beggar, no moralist, and no whoremonger, no adulterer, no swearer, no thief, no murderer. Blessed be the God of all grace, it does not shut out me. I greatly rejoice in this. I am one of the "whosoevers," for I do believe in Jesus with all my heart. I have no hope but in him, and therefore I know that I have remission of my sins. I long for you all to have it too: not because of any merits of yours, not because of any feelings of yours, not because of any doings of yours, but for his dear sake who was hanged on a tree you shall have remission if you believe in him. Oh, trust ye him; trust ye him, and ye shall have pardon. My heart longs that you should at this moment accept Jesus and live. Why not? Often when we have spoken like this the Holy Spirit has cheered the hearts of men and brought them to Christ, and why should he not do it this morning? Pray for it, believers! This moment offer your intense prayers to heaven in silent ejaculations. The Spirit of God is here in this

assembly, and he will work in answer to our warm desires. I have preached the gospel: I know it is the very gospel of the blessed God. Will he not bear witness to his own truth? Has he not pledged himself to do it? I have preached his truth as well as I can, relying only upon his help, and I have earnestly avoided all tawdry speech of human wisdom, telling you in all simplicity the old, old story of my blessed Lord, and therefore I confidently expect to see the word prosper. The Holy Spirit must bless the preaching of the cross: it is his office, his nature, his usual way to do so. He has not changed, nor ceased to be what he used to be, and therefore he will bless his people and make his gospel the power of God unto salvation. O my dear hearer, seize the blessing by an instant faith. God help you to do it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 429, 507.

TO SERMON READERS.

Nightingale-lane, Balham, June 1, 1880.

DEAR FRIENDS,

On the 22nd of June we hope to lay the first stone of the Girls' Orphanage. The plans proposed will cause an expenditure of £11,000; we intend to enter upon a contract for £8,000 at once, and help is urgently needed. If the design commends itself to you, your immediate aid will be greatly valued by your loving friend,

C. H. SPURGEON.

etropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

A Sermon

LIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 6TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping
shing of teeth."—Matthew xxv. 30.
kewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded
, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to
ike xvii. 10.
lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant."—
xxv. 21.

is a narrow path between indifference and morbid sensibility.
ien seem to feel no holy anxiety: they place their Master's talent
arth, leave it there, and take their pleasure and their ease without
nt's compunction. Others profess to be so anxious to be right
ey come to the conclusion that they can never be so, and fall
horror of God, viewing his service as a drudgery, and him-
a hard master—though probably they never say so. Between
vo lines there is a path, narrow as a razor's edge, which only the
f God can enable us to trace; it is free alike from carelessness
m bondage, and consists in a sense of responsibility bravely borne
help of the Holy Spirit. The right way usually lies between
tremes: it is the narrow channel between the rock and the
ol. There is a sacred way which runs between self-congratula-
d despondency, a very difficult track to find, and very hard to
There are great perils in the consciousness that you have done
d that you are serving God with all your might; for you may
think that you are a deserving person, worthy to rank among
nces of Israel. The danger of being puffed up can hardly be
mated: a dizzy head soon brings a fall. But perhaps equally
readed on the other side is that sense of unworthiness which para-
l exertion, making you feel that you are incapable of anything
great or good. Under this impulse have men fled from the
of God into a life of solitude; they felt that they could not
valiantly in the battle of life, and therefore they fled from the
fore the fight began, to become hermits or monks; as if it were
to do the Lord's perfect will by doing nothing at all, and to dis-
the duties to which they were born by an unnatural mode of exist-
Blessed is that man who finds the strait and narrow way between

high thoughts of self and hard thoughts of God, between self-esteem and a timid shrinking from all effort. My desire is that the Spirit of God may guide our minds into the golden mean where holy graces blend, and the contending vices, equally natural to our evil hearts, are all excluded. May the Spirit of God bless our three texts and the three subjects suggested by them, so that we may be put right, and then by infinite mercy may be kept right until the great day of account.

Let us read Matthew xxv. 30.

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In this our first text we have THE VERDICT OF JUSTICE upon the man who did not use his talent. The man is here styled an "unprofitable servant" because he was slothful, useless, worthless. He did not bring his master interest for his money nor render him any sincere service. He did not faithfully discharge the trust reposed in him as his fellow servants did.

Notice, first, that *this unprofitable person was a servant.* He never denied that he was a servant; in fact, it was by his position as a servant that he became possessed of his one talent, and to that possession he never demurred. If he had been capable of receiving more, there is no reason why he should not have had two talents, or five; for the Scripture tells us that the master gave to every man according to his several ability. He owned the rule of his master even in the act of burying the talent, and in appearing before him to give an account. This makes the subject the more heart-searching for you and for me; for we, too, profess to be servants—servants of the Lord our God. Judgment must begin at the house of God; that is, with those who are in the house of the Lord as children and servants: let us, therefore, look well to our goings. If judgment first begin at us, "what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If this in our text be judgment upon servants, what will be the judgment upon enemies? This man acknowledged that he was a servant even to the last; and though he was impertinent and impudent enough to express a most wicked and slanderous opinion about his master, yet he neither denied his own position as a servant, nor the fact that his talent was his lord's, for he said, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." In thus speaking he went rather further than some professing Christians do, for they live as if Christianity were all eating the fat and drinking the sweet and not serving at all; as if religion had many privileges but no precepts, and as if, when men were saved, they became licensed loiterers to whom it is a matter of honour to magnify free grace by standing all the day idle in the market-place. Alas, I know some who never do a hand's turn for Christ, and yet call him Master and Lord. Ill will it fare with them at his coming. Many of us acknowledge that we are servants, that everything we have belongs to our Master, and that we are bound to live for him. So far, so good; but we may get as far as that, and yet in the end we may be found unprofitable servants, and so be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us take heed of this.

This man, though a servant, *thought ill of his master,* and disliked his

vice: he said, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where ou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed." rtain professors who have stolen into the church are of the same nd: they dare not say that they regret their having joined the urch, and yet they so act that all may conclude that if it could undone they would not do the like again. They do not find asure in the service of God, but continue to pursue its routine as a tter of habit or a hard obligation. They get into the spirit of the ler brother, and they say, "Lo; these many years do I serve thee, ither transgressed I at any time thy commandments, and yet thou ver gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." They down on the shady side of godliness, and never bask in the sun ich shines full upon it. They forget that the father said to the elder , "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." He ght have had as many feastings, as many lambs and kids as he ired, he would have been denied no good thing. The presence of father ought to have been his joy and his delight; and better than merry-makings with his friends; and it would have been so if he d been in a proper state of heart. The man who hid his talent had ried the evil and petulant spirit much further than that elder brother; t the germs are the same, and we must mind that we crush them at the ginning.

This unprofitable servant looked upon his master as one that reaped ere he never sowed, and used the rake to gather together what he d never scattered: he meant that he was a hard, exacting, and unjust son, whom it was difficult to please. He judged his lord to be one o expected more of his servants than he had any right to look for, d he had such a hatred of his unjust conduct that he resolved to tell n to his face what he thought of him. This spirit may readily creep er the minds of professors; I fear it is brooding over many even w, for they are not content with Christ. If they want pleasure they outside the church to get it: their joys are not within the circle of ich Christ is the centre. Their religion is their labour, not their de-ht; their God is their dread, not their joy. They do not delight mselves in the Lord, and therefore he does not give them the desire their hearts, and so they grow more and more discontented. They uld not call him "God, mine exceeding joy," and so he is a terror to m. Devotion is a dreary engagement to them; they wish that they uld escape from it with an easy conscience. They do not say as ch to their secret selves: but you can read between the lines these rds—"What a weariness it is." It is no wonder when things come this pass that a professor becomes an unprofitable servant; for who can do a work well which he hates to do? Forced service is not de-able. God wants not slaves to grace his throne. A servant who is pleased with his situation had better leave; if he is not content h his Master he had better find another, for their mutual relation-p will be unpleasant and unprofitable. When it comes to this, that and I are discontented with our God, and dissatisfied with his rk, we had better look out for another lord, if any such will have us, we shall certainly be unprofitable to the Lord Jesus from our want love to him.

Note next, that, albeit this man was doing nothing for his master, *he did not think himself an unprofitable servant.* He exhibited no self-depreciation, no humbling, no contrition. He was as bold as brass, and said unblushingly, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." He came before his master with no apologies or excuses. He did not join with those who have done all, and then say, "We are unprofitable servants"; for he felt that he had dealt with his Lord as the justice of the case deserved; indeed, instead of acknowledging any fault he turned to accusing his lord. It is even so with false professors. They have no idea that they are hypocrites, the thought does not cross their minds. They have no notion that they are unfaithful. Hint at it, and see how they will defend themselves. If they are not living as they ought to do, they claim to be pitied rather than blamed; the blame lies with Providence; it is the fault of circumstances: it is the fault of anybody but themselves. They have done nothing, and yet they feel more at ease than those who have done everything. They have taken the trouble to dig in the earth and hide their talent, and they as good as ask—what more do you want? Is God so exacting as to expect me to bring more to him than he gave me? I am as grateful and prayerful as God makes me—what more will he require? There is you see no bowing in the dust with a sense of imperfection, but an arrogant casting upon God of all blame; and this, too, under the pretence of honouring his sovereign grace! Ah me! that men should be able to torture truth into such presumptuous falsehood.

Mark well, that the verdict of justice at last may turn out to be the very opposite of that which we pronounce upon ourselves. He who proudly thinks himself profitable shall be found unprofitable, and he who modestly judges himself to be unprofitable may in the end come to hear his Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." So little are we able, through the defects of our conscience, to form a right estimate of ourselves, that we frequently reckon ourselves to be rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, when, indeed, we are naked, and poor, and miserable. Such was the case with this unfaithful servant: he wrapped himself up in the conceit that he was even more just than his lord, and had an argument to plead which he thought would exonerate him from all blame.

It should give rise to much searching of heart when we notice *what this unprofitable servant did, or, rather, what he did not do.* He carefully deposited his capital where no one was able to find it and steal it; and there was an end of his service. We ought to observe that he did not spend that talent upon himself, or use it in business for his own benefit. He was not a thief, nor in any way a misappropriator of moneys placed under his charge. In this he excels many who profess to be the servants of God, and yet live to themselves only. What little talent they have is used in their own business, and never upon their Lord's concerns. They have the power of getting money, but their money is not made for Christ; such an idea never occurs to them. Their efforts are all for themselves, or—to use other words to express the same thing—*for* their families. Yonder is a man who has the gift of eloquent speech, and he uses it, not for Christ, but for himself, that he may win popularity, that he might arrive at a respectable position: the one end and object of his

most earnest speech is to bring grist to his own mill, and gain to his own estate. Everywhere this is to be seen amongst professors, that they are living to themselves: they are not adulterers or drunkards, far from it; neither are they thieves or spendthrifts; they are decent, orderly, quiet sort of people; but still, they begin and end with self. What is this but to be an unprofitable servant? What is a servant to me if he works hard for himself and does nothing for me? A professing Christian may toil till he becomes a rich man, an alderman in the City, a Lord Mayor, a member of Parliament, a millionaire; but what does that prove? Why, that he could work and did work well for himself; and if all this while he has done little or nothing for Christ, he is all the more condemned by his own success: if he had worked for his Lord as he worked for himself, what might he not have accomplished? The unprofitable servant in the parable was not so bad as that: and yet he was cast into outer darkness. What then will become of some of you?

Furthermore, the wicked servant did not go and mis-spend his talent: he did not waste it in self-indulgence and wickedness as the prodigal son did, who spent his substance in riotous living. Oh, no; he was a much better man than that. He would not waste a halfpenny; he was all for saving and running no risks. The talent was as he received it, only wrapped up in a napkin and hidden in the earth—put into a bank, in fact, but a bank which gave no interest. He never touched a penny of it for a feast or a revel, and therefore could not be accused of being a spendthrift with his lord's money; in all which he was superior to those who yield their strength to sin, and use their abilities to gratify the guilty passions of themselves and others.

I grieve to add that some who call themselves servants of Christ lay out their strength to undermine the gospel they profess to teach; they speak against the holy name by which they are named, and thus they use their talent against their Master. This man did not do so; he was bad enough in heart for anything, but he had never openly become so base a traitor. He never employed learning in order to raise needless doubts, or to resist the plain doctrines of the word of God; this has been reserved for divines of these latter days—days which produce monsters unknown to less educated times.

This man's talent had not been wasted under his hand, it was as he had received it, and he therefore reckoned he had been faithful. Ah! but this is not what Christ calls faithfulness—just to keep where we are. If you think you have grace and only keep what you have, without obtaining more, it will be hiding your talent in the earth and keeping it a barren thing. It is not enough to retain; you must advance. The capital may be there, but where is the interest? To be living without aim or purpose beyond that of keeping up your position is to be a wicked and slothful servant, condemned already. While meditating upon this subject may we each one say to himself, "Lord, is it I?"

His lord called this servant "wicked." Is it, then, a wicked thing to be unprofitable? Surely wickedness must mean some positive action. No. Not to do right is to be wicked; not to live for Christ is to be wicked; not to be of use in the world is to be wicked; not to bring glory to the

name of the Lord is to be wicked; to be slothful is to be wicked. It is clear that there are many wicked people in the world who would not like to be called so. "Wicked and slothful;" these are the two words which are riveted together by the Lord Jesus, whose speech is always wise. A schoolboy was asked by his master "What are you doing, John?" He was called up; and thought to be quite clear by saying, "I was doing nothing, sir;" but his master answered, "That is the very thing for which I called you out, for you ought to have been doing the lesson which I set you." It will be no excuse at the last for you to cry, "I was doing nothing, sir!" Were not those on the left hand made to depart with a curse upon them because they did nothing? Is it not written: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." He who does nothing is a "wicked and slothful servant."

This man was condemned to outer darkness. Notice this: he was condemned to be *as he was*, for hell, in one light, may be described as the great Captain's saying, "As you were." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." In another world there is permanence of character: enduring holiness is heaven, continual evil is hell. This man was outside of the family of his lord. He thought his lord a hard master, and so proved that he had no love to him, and that he was not really one of his household. He was outside in heart, and so his lord said to him, "Remain outside." Besides that, he was in the dark: he had wrong notions of his master; for his lord was not an austere and hard man, he did not gather where he had not strawed, nor reap where he had not sown. Therefore his lord said, "You are wilfully in the dark: abide there in the darkness which is outside." This man was envious: he could not endure his master's prosperity; he gnashed his teeth at the thought of it. He was sentenced to continue in that mind, and so to gnash his teeth for ever. This is a dreadful idea of eternal punishment, this permanence of character in an immortal spirit:—"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still." While the character of the ungodly will be permanent, it will also be more and more developed along its own lines: the bad points will become worse, and, with nothing to restrain it, evil will become viler still. In the next world, where there are no hindrances from the existence of a church and a gospel, the man will ripen to a more hideous maturity of enmity against God, and a more horrible degree of consequent misery. Sorrow is bound up with sin: abiding in sinfulness, a man must necessarily abide in wretchedness; for the wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. What must it be to be for ever outside the family of God! Never to be God's child! For ever in the dark! Never to see the light of holy knowledge, and purity, and hope! For ever to gnash one's teeth with painful contempt and abhorrence of God, whom to hate is hell! O for grace to be made to love him, whom to love is heaven. The unprofitable servant had a dreadful wage to take when his master reckoned with him, but who can say that he had not well earned it? He had the due reward [redacted] his deeds. O our God! grant that such may not be the lot of any [redacted] of us!

I must now call your attention to the second text:—

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."—Luke xvii. 10.

This is THE VERDICT OF SELF-ABASEMENT, given forth from the heart of servants who had laboriously discharged the full work of the day. This is a part of a parable intended to rebuke all notions of self-importance and human merit. When a servant has been ploughing or feeding cattle, his master does not say to him, "Sit down, and I will wait upon you, for I am deeply in your debt." No, his master bids him prepare the evening meal and wait upon him. His services are due, and therefore his master does not praise him as if he were a wonder and a hero. He is only doing his duty if he perseveres from morning light to set of sun, and he by no means expects to have his work held up to admiration or rewarded with extra pay and humble thanks. Neither are we to boast of our services, but think little of them, confessing that we are unprofitable servants.

Whatever of pain may have been caused by the first part of the discourse, I trust it will only prepare us the more deeply to enter into the spirit of our second text. Both these texts are graven on my heart as with an iron pen, by a merciless wound, inflicted when I was too feeble to bear it. When I was exceedingly ill in the South of France, and deeply depressed in spirit—so deeply depressed and so sick and ill that I scarce knew how to live,—one of those malicious persons who commonly haunt all public men, and especially ministers, sent me anonymously a letter, openly directed to "*That unprofitable servant C. H. Spurgeon.*" This letter contained tracts directed to the enemies of the Lord Jesus, with passages marked and underlined, with notes applying them to myself. How many Rabshekahs have in their day written to me! Ordinarily I read them with the patience which comes of use, and they go to light the fire. I do not look for exemption from this annoyance, nor do I usually feel it hard to bear, but in the hour when my spirits were depressed, and I was in terrible pain, this reviling letter cut me to the quick. I turned upon my bed and asked—Am I, then, an unprofitable servant? I grieved exceedingly, and could not lift up my head, or find rest. I reviewed my life, and saw its infirmities and imperfections, but knew not how to put my case till this second text came to my relief, and answered as the verdict of my bruised heart. I said to myself, "I hope I am not an unprofitable servant in the sense in which this person intends to call me so; but I am assuredly so in the other sense." I cast myself upon my Lord and Master once again with a deeper sense of the meaning of the text than I had felt before: his atoning sacrifice revived me, and in humble faith I found rest. By the way, I wonder that any human being should find pleasure in trying to inflict pain upon those who are sick and depressed; yet are there persons who delight to do so. Surely, if there are no evil spirits down below, there are some up above, and the servants of the Lord Jesus receive painful proofs of their activity. Let me, then, if you have felt any pain from the first text lead you to the point at which I personally arrived when at last I could thank God for that letter, and feel that it was salutary medicine to my spirit.

This which is put into our mouths as a confession that we are unprofitable servants is meant to rebuke us when we think we are somebody, and have done somewhat worthy of praise. Our text is meant to rebuke us if we think that we have done enough, that we have borne the burden and heat of the day a long time, and have been kept at our post beyond our own watch. If we conclude that we have achieved a fine day's work of harvesting, and ought to be invited home to rest, the text upbraids us. If we feel an inordinate covetousness after comfort, and wish the Lord would give us some present and striking reward for what we have done, the text shames us. This is a proud, unchildlike, unservantlike spirit, and it must be put down with a firm hand.

In the first place, *in what way can we have profited God?* Eliphaz has well said, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" If we have given to God of our substance, is he our debtor? In what way have we enriched him to whom all the silver and gold belongs? If we have laid our lives out with the devotion of martyrs and missionaries for his sake, what is that to him, whose glory fills the heavens and the earth? How can we dream of putting the Eternal in debt to us? The right spirit is to say with David, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." How can a man place his Maker under an obligation to him? Let us not dote so blasphemously.

Dear brethren, we ought to recollect that *whatever service we have been able to render has been a matter of debt.* I hope our morality is not fallen so low that we take credit to ourselves for paying our debts. I do not find men in business priding themselves and saying, "I paid a thousand pounds this morning to such an one." "Well, did you give it to him?" "Oh no; it was all owing to him." Is that any great thing? Have we come to such a low state of spiritual morals that we think we have done a great deal when we give to God his due? "It is he that made us, and not we ourselves." Jesus Christ has bought us: "we are not our own," for we are "bought with a price." We have also entered into covenant with him, and given ourselves over to him voluntarily. Were we not baptized into his name and into his death? Whatever we may do is only what he has a right to claim at our hands from our creation, redemption, and professed surrender to him. When we have persevered in the hard work of ploughing till no field is left untilled, when we have done the pleasanter work of feeding the sheep and when we have finished by spreading the table of communion for our Lord: when we have done all we have done no more than was our duty to have done. Why boast we, then, or cry for a discharge, or look for thanks?

Over and above this there is the sad reflection that, alas, *in all we have done we have been unprofitable through being imperfect.* In the ploughing there have been baulks, in the feeding of the cattle there have been harshness and forgetfulness, in the spreading of the table the viands have been unworthy of such a Lord as we serve. How must our service

appear to him of whom we read, "Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly." Can any of you look back upon your service of your Lord with satisfaction? If you can, I cannot say I envy you, for I do not sympathise with you in the least degree, but tremble for your safety. As for myself, I am compelled to say with solemn truthfulness that I am not content with anything I have ever done. I have half wished to live my life over again, but now I regret that my proud heart allowed me so to wish, since the probabilities are that I should do worse the second time. Whatever grace has done for me I acknowledge with deep gratitude; but so far as I have done anything myself I beg pardon for it. I pray God to forgive my prayers, for they have been full of fault; I beseech him to forgive even this confession, for it is not as humble as it ought to be; I beseech him to wash my tears and purge my devotions, and to baptize me into a true burial with my Saviour, that I may be quite forgotten in myself, and only remembered in him. Ah, Lord, thou knowest how far we fall short of the humility we ought to feel. Pardon us in this thing. We are all of us unprofitable servants, and if thou shouldst judge us by the law we must be cast away.

Once more, we cannot congratulate ourselves at all, even if we have had success in our Lord's work, since *for all that we have done we are indebted to our Lord's abundant grace.* If we had done all our duty, we should not have done anything if his grace had not enabled us to do it. If our zeal no respite knows, it is he that keeps the fire burning. If our tears of repentance flow, it is he that strikes the rock and fetches the waters from it. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be any faith, if there be any ardour, if there be any likeness to Christ, we are his workmanship, created by him, and therefore to ourselves we dare not take a particle of the praise. Of thine own have we given unto thee, great God! So far as anything has been worth thine accepting, it was thine own beforehand. Hence the best are still unprofitable servants.

If we have special cause of regret because of some evident error, we shall be wise to go in a lowly spirit and confess the fault, and then go on doing the work of each day in a plodding, hopeful spirit. Whenever you get distressed because you cannot do what you would; whenever you see the faultiness of your own service, and condemn yourself for it, the best thing is to go and do something more in the strength of the Lord. If you have not served Jesus well up to now, go and do better. If you make a blunder do not tell everybody, and say that you will never try again, but do two good things to make up for the failure. Say, "My blessed Lord and Master shall not be more a loser by me than I can help. I will not so much fret over the past as amend the present and wake up for the future." Brethren, try to be more profitable, and ask for more grace. The servant's business is not to hide himself in a corner of the field and cry, but to go on ploughing; not to bleat with sheep, but feed them, and so prove your love to Jesus. You are not to stand at the head of the table and say, "I have not spread the table for my Master so well as I could have desired." No, go and spread it better. Have courage; you are not serving a hard Master after all; and, though you very properly call yourself an unprofitable servant, be of good cheer, for a gentler

verdict shall be pronounced upon you ere long. You are not your own judge either for good or ill; another judge is at the door, and when he cometh he will think better of you than your self-abasement permits you to think of yourself: he will judge you by the rule of grace and not by law, and he will end all that dread which comes of a legal spirit and hovers over you with vampire wings.

Thus I have brought you to the third text,

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant." —Matthew xxv. 21.

I shall not try to preach upon that cheering word, but shall only say a word or two upon it. It is much too grand a text to be treated upon at the end of a sermon. We find the Lord saying to those who had used their talents industriously, "Well done, good and faithful servant." This is THE VERDICT OF GRACE. Blessed is the man who shall own himself to be an unfaithful servant; and blessed is the man to whom his Lord shall say, "Thou good and faithful servant."

Observe here that the "Well done" of the Master is *given to faithfulness.* It is not "Well done, thou good and brilliant servant;" for perhaps the man never shone at all in the eyes of those who appreciate glare and glitter. It is not, "Well done, thou great and distinguished servant;" for it is possible that he was never known beyond his native village. He conscientiously did his best with his "few things," and never wasted an opportunity for doing good, and thus he proved himself faithful.

The same praise was given to the man with two talents as to his fellow-servant with five. Their stations were very different; but their reward was the same. "Well done, good and faithful servant," was won and enjoyed by each of them. Is it not very sweet to think that though I may have only one talent I shall not thereby be debarred from my Lord's praise? It is my faithfulness on which he will fix his eye, and not upon the number of my talents. I may have made many mistakes, and have confessed my faults with great grief; but he will commend me as he did the woman of whom he said, "She hath done what she could." It is better to be faithful in the infant-school than to be unfaithful in a noble class of young men. Better to be faithful in a hamlet over two or three score of people, than to be unfaithful in a great city parish, with thousands perishing in consequence. Better to be faithful in a cottage meeting, speaking of Christ crucified to half-a-hundred villagers, than to be unfaithful in a great building where thousands congregate. I pray you be faithful in laying out all that you are and have for God. As long as you live, whatever faults you have, be not half-hearted or double-minded, but be faithful in intent and desire. This is the point of the Judge's praise,—the servant's faithfulness.

This verdict was *given of sovereign grace.* The reward was not according to the work, for the servant had been "faithful in a few things," but he was made "ruler over many things." The verdict itself is not after the rule of works, but according to the law of grace. Our good works are evidences of grace within us; our faithfulness, therefore, as servants, will be the evidence of our having a loving spirit towards our Master,—evidence, therefore, that our heart is changed, and that we have

been made to love him for whom once we had no affection. Our works are the proof of our love, and hence they stand as evidence of the grace of God. God first gives us grace, and then rewards us for it. He works in us, and then counts the fruit as our work. We work out our own salvation, because "he worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." If he shall ever say, "Well done" to you and to me it will be because of his own rich grace, and not because of our merits. And, indeed, this is where we must all come and where we must all keep; for the idea that we have any personal merit will soon make us find fault with our Master, and his service, as being austere and hard.

I have sometimes admired how men who have denied the doctrine of salvation by grace, as a matter of theology, have, nevertheless, admitted it in their devotions. They have entered into controversy against it, and yet unconsciously they have believed it. An extreme case is that of Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the most inveterate enemies of the Reformation, and a renowned antagonist of the teaching of Martin Luther. I will quote from one of his works (*Inst. De Justificatione, Lib. v., c.* 1). He says, in summing up, "On account of the uncertain nature of our own works and the danger of vain-glory, it is the safest course to place our whole trust in the mercy and loving-kindness of God." Thou hast well said, O Cardinal; and since the safest course is that which we would choose, we will place our whole trust in the mercy and loving-kindness of God. It is reported, and I believe on excellent authority, that this great man, who had all his life long been crying up salvation by works, when dying, breathed a prayer in Latin, the translation of which would be something like this: "I beseech God, who weighs not our merits, but graciously pardons our offences, that he would receive me among his saints and his elect." Is Saul also among the prophets? Does Bellarmine at the last pray like a Calvinist? Such a case makes one hope that many others may be saved in an apostate church. Thank God, many are a great deal better than their creed, and in their hearts believe what, as polemical theologians, they deny. However this may be, I know that if I am saved or rewarded it must be of grace alone, for I can have no other hope. As for those who have done much for the church, we know that they will disclaim all praise, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and gave thee meat; or thirsty and gave thee drink?" All the Lord's faithful servants will sing, "*Non nobis domine.*" Not unto us. Not unto us.

Lastly, brethren, with what infinite delight will Jesus fill our hearts if, through divine grace, we are happy enough to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Oh, if we shall hold on to the end despite the temptations of Satan, and the weakness of our nature, and all the entanglements of the world, and keep our garments unspotted from the world, preaching Christ according to our measure of ability, and winning souls for him, what an honour it will be! What bliss for him to say, "Well done." The music of these two words will have heaven in them to us. How different it will be from the verdict of our fellow-men, who are often finding fault with this and that, though we do our best. We never could please them, but we have pleased our Lord. Men were always misinterpreting our words and misjudging our motives, but he sets all right by saying, "Well done!" Little will it matter then what

all the rest have said: neither the flattering words of friends nor the harsh condemnations of enemies will have any weight with us when he says, "Well done!" Not with pride shall we receive that eulogium; for we shall reckon ourselves even then to have been unprofitable servants; but oh how we shall love him for setting such an estimate upon the cups of cold water we gave to his disciples, and the poor broken service we tried to render him. What condescension to call that well done which we feel was so ill done!

I pray God's servants here, who this morning first began with searching themselves, and then went on to confess their imperfections, now to close by rejoicing in the fact that, if we are believing in Christ Jesus, and are really consecrated to him, we shall conclude this life and begin the next with that blessed verdict of "Well done!" Mind, however, that you are those who are doing all and are faithful. I hear some people speak against self-righteousness, to whom I would say, "You need not say much about that matter, for it does not concern you, since you have no righteousness to be proud of." I hear persons speak against salvation by good works who are in no danger of falling into that error, since good works and their lives have long parted company. What I do admire is to see a man like Paul, who lived for Jesus, and was ready to die for him, yet saying at the close of his life, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Go on, brothers, and think not of resting till your day's work is done. Serve God with all your might. Do more than the Pharisees, who hope to be saved by their zeal. Do more than your brethren expect of you, and then, when you have done all, lay it at your Redeemer's feet with this confession, "I am an unprofitable servant." It is to those who blend faithfulness with humility and ardour with self-abasement that Jesus will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxv. 14—46.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—906, 670, 361.

NOTICE.—In the afternoon of June 22nd we hold a great meeting for laying the first stones of the Stockwell Orphanage *for Girls*. The sum of £11,000 will be needed for the block containing dwellings and school-rooms for 250 girls. Towards this about £4,500 have been promised. A great effort is needed. It would give great joy to the preacher to receive large help on or before the 22nd. Address—C. H. SPURGEON, Nightingale Lane, Balham.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

(On behalf of the Free Hospitals of London).

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."—2 Thessalonians ii. 16, 17.

THE Thessalonian saints had been much persecuted and afflicted, and they had exhibited great faith, insomuch that Paul says, "We ourselves glory in you in the church of God for your patience and faith." As if they had not enough trouble coming from the outside, there sprang up in their midst certain hot-headed teachers who declared that the day of Christ was immediately at hand. The coming of the Lord is the grandest hope of the church, and it is an evidence of the extreme power of error to poison and pervert truth that a hope which is our brightest consolation can be so twisted as to cause the saints to be "shaken in mind" and troubled. So it appears to have been with the Thessalonians. They were perplexed with mysterious rumours, which the zealots probably supported by a misinterpretation of the apostle's own language in his former letter to them. It would appear that they were tempted to leave their regular habits of life: and some of them neglected their business upon the theory that there was no need to attend to it, because the world was so speedily to be at an end. This gave an occasion for "busy-bodies" to cease from working, and create great disquietude among the more sober members, and therefore Paul wrote them this second letter, with the earnest intent that they might be established in the truth and kept from evil, that disorderly walking might be repressed, and that the church might be at peace. Paul felt that it was of the utmost importance that this honourable church should be at rest, and should not lack consolation, either as to its bitter persecutions or its internal difficulties.

My subject this morning leads me to make this the first point to be dwelt upon—*it is most important that believers should enjoy consolation.* When I have for a while spoken upon that, I would with delight expatiate upon the fact that *this consolation is most freely provided and bestowed in*

the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is from this subject that I purpose to draw a practical inference which may help the collection for the hospitals, namely, that the freeness with which *these consolations are given to us should lead us to a holy benevolence towards others who need consolation.*

I. First, then, IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD ENJOY CONSOLATION. We must not say that it does not matter whether we are doubting or believing, whether we are sighing or rejoicing: it does matter a great deal. Every commander knows that if he has not his soldiers in good heart, there may be a great many of them, and they may be well trained for war, but the battle is not likely to be won. Courage is essential to valour. Much depends upon the case in which a man finds himself upon the eve of conflict. If the soldier has no stomach for the fight, as our forefathers were wont to say, he will make a sorry display when the tug of war comes on. The Lord delights not to see his people with their heads hanging down like bulrushes, depressed and dismayed. His word to them is, "Be strong; fear not." He is "the blessed God," and he would have those who know his glorious gospel to live a life of blessedness, that they may the better serve him. Does not his Spirit say, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"? Has he not given the Comforter, that he may continually console us? Believers will far better answer the Lord's purpose, and bring more glory to his name, if they are filled with peace and joy in believing, than they will if they yield to despondency: for the Scripture saith, "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

I am sure that the Lord would have us be of good courage, for its importance is *implied in the very existence of our text.* It is the prayer of an inspired man. Paul wrote not only at the dictate of brotherly love, but under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, when he penned this prayer, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." The Holy Spirit moved the man of God to breathe this desire, and to put it on record, that it might be the desire of all good men as long as ever the epistle should be read, and that all Christian men should value consolation, even as it was valued by one who was a tender lover of the flock of Christ. It would be great presumption on our part lightly to esteem that which was a prime matter of concern with so instructed and experienced a teacher as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul puts this prayer into a very remarkable shape: to my mind it is expressed in a deeply solemn form, for he writes, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ *himself*." Was there need for that word "himself"? Does it not make it very emphatic that he seems to call upon the Lord Jesus to give them comfort, not by any intermediate agency, but in his own person and by his own power. It is so essential that we should be comforted that Jesus, even our own Lord Jesus Christ, is entreated himself to become the consolation of his people. Is not that a weighty matter which leads the reverent heart of Paul thus to plead? Nor is this all, for he goes on to say, "and God, even our Father": as if God the Father himself must undertake the work of cheering his people, so needful was it that they should be at rest. No one else could give them such comfort as they required, but God could do it, and therefore

"God, even our Father" must be specially invoked. The prayer is that the Lord Jesus and the Father who are one may join in the most needful work of comforting the hearts of the tried Thessalonian saints. It reminds me of Paul's solemn benediction in the opening of the epistle, "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This prayer of inspiration, couched in such solemn terms and directed so earnestly to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and to God, even our Father, proves the importance and necessity of saints being filled with comfort.

Nor is this the only instance in the epistle where this desire is expressed, for a little further on, in the third chapter, at the sixteenth verse, we have it in other words but with equal forcefulness: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means." I do not know that in one single sentence there could be compressed a more intense desire that they may be at peace. "The Lord" is invoked, and he is styled "the Lord of peace," that all his divine majesty may be seen, and his peace-making power may be displayed. "The Lord of peace" is entreated to give peace, not by his angels nor by his ministers, nor by his providence, but "himself" to give peace; and this is asked for "always," "give you peace always." Peace in the cool of the evening is not enough, it is needed at all parts of the day, in all the days of the year, in every period of life, in every place, and under all circumstances. The wish is expressed with great breadth in the words, "Give you peace always *by all means*:" if it cannot be brought by one means let it be by another, but somehow or other may you enjoy the peace which the Lord alone can create. I cannot imagine that such a prayer as this would have been placed among the Scriptures of truth, which are to be our guide till the Lord cometh, unless it had been of the utmost importance that we should enjoy peace of mind.

The apostle almost hints at one reason for this strong necessity, for in one word he lets us see that it is a vital blessing because *it affects the Christian's heart*. His expression is, "Comfort your hearts." It is well to have a strong hand, how else shall we labour? It is well to have a firm tread, how else shall we stand? Yet these are secondary matters as compared with a healthy heart. A disease of the heart is an injury to the whole man. If anything goes amiss at the fountain the streams of life soon feel it. The entire manhood depends upon the heart; hence the need of comfort for the heart, and the value of the promise "He shall strengthen thine heart." It is a calamity when the springs of action are weakened, and the spirit is made to sink. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Touch the flesh where else you will, but spare the brain and the heart, for these are the man so nearly, that he is wounded to the quick when these are hurt. When the spirits begin to sink then the waters have come in, even into the soul. Hence our Lord said to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." However your house may be troubled, however your bodily frame may be troubled, "let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Faith upholds the heart, and enables the man to bear up under pressure; faith, I say, and nothing else. I am sure, dear friends, you will clearly see the need that we should be comforted, because the want of comfort will grievously affect the action

of the heart and mar the entire life-force of our being. See ye to it, then, that ye lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees, by saying to them that are of a feeble heart, "Be strong, fear not." Ask that the heart may rejoice in God, for then the roughness of the way and the stress of the weather will be matters of small concern.

Brethren beloved, *this confidence is needful to prevent impatience* and other evils. Possibly it was the lack of comfort which led certain of the Thessalonians to preach the immediate coming of the Lord: their impatience excited the wish, and the wish led on to the assertion. When men lose the present comfort of plain gospel doctrines they are very apt to begin speculating, and in carnal heat foretelling the coming of the Lord. They left that patient waiting which is our duty, for a fevered prophesying which is nowhere encouraged in the word of God. Hence the apostle said to them in the fifth verse of the third chapter, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." A man does not wait patiently when he is low in spirit and weary at heart. Let a man feel his own heart right with God, and be at peace, and he can quietly wait until Christ comes, even though the Lord shall delay his coming for many a day: but when everything is tossed about, and our hope grows dim, and our fellowship is broken, and our zeal is burning low, we jump at anything which will end the struggle and enable us to avoid further effort. Laziness and despondency lead many to cry, "Why are his chariots so long in coming?" just as idle workmen long for Saturday night. You think time too long and life too long, for you are not happy where your Lord has placed you, and you are eager to rush out of the field of service into the chamber of rest. This will not do, my brethren, either for you or for me. We must be braced up to further labour. We must receive comfort in our spirit that we may be able patiently to toil on, however long life may be, and however long our Lord may delay; for if not, if we grow impatient, we may resort to rash fanatical action, as I have already shown you that certain Thessalonians did. Under the idea that the Lord was coming they neglected their daily calling, and became busybodies, gadding about from house to house, and loafing upon others who did not pretend to be quite so spiritual. They were mere star-gazers, looking for the advent with their mouths open and their eyes up-turned, being evermore in grievous danger of falling into a ditch. Paul bade them get to work and eat their own bread, quoting himself as an example, for he had wrought with labour and travail night and day that he might not be chargeable to them.

My friend, if you are growing impatient for the day of the Lord, I pray that comfort of heart may cool you. To-morrow morning take down the shop shutters and sell your goods as if Christ were not coming at all, for should he come you will be all the more fit to meet him for being engaged in your calling. If I knew that the Lord would come to-morrow I should attend to my regular Monday duties, and on no account leave one of them to go and stand at the window, looking for wonders. Whether the Master comes to-morrow or in a thousand years your wisest course is to follow your calling in his fear and for his sake. We ought to do our work better under the impression that perhaps he may come and find us at it; but we may not neglect our duty under pretence of his appearing.

Of this, however, be sure, you will not patiently wait if you are not happy. You will not go on conscientiously plodding, doing the same work, walking in the same regular way, unless your heart is stayed upon God. You will run after this novelty or that if your mind is not resting in Jesus. Hence the devout prayer of our text that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ himself may comfort our hearts and stablish us in every good word and work.

Once more, I am sure this comfort is eminently desirable, because *it promotes fruitfulness*. The apostle more than hints at this: "Comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work." When we are not happy in the Lord we do not give ourselves heartily to his service. We grow impatient, and then we need the exhortation of the thirteenth verse of the third chapter, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." If we feel that Jesus is ours, that all things are working for our good, and that eternal glory is secured to us by a sure covenant, we are moved by gratitude to complete consecration, for the love of Christ constraineth us. Doubts and disquietudes take us off from our Master's work, but when he gives us rest we take his yoke upon us cheerfully, and find in it yet further rest unto our souls. When our hearts sing our hands toil, and we cannot do enough for our Redeeming Lord. Right gladly do we present ourselves as living sacrifices to him who "loved us and gave himself for us." Thus, too, we are stablished in our work, and bound with fresh bonds to it, so that we delight to labour on till he shall come who shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

So it all comes to this. We, who are constitutionally despondent, must not give way to depression; we must cry to God to help us by the divine Comforter. We must aim at being cheerful Christians. We have abundant reasons for being cheerful, for the Father himself loveth us, and hath given us everlasting consolation in Christ Jesus. Do not let us be so unwise, and so ungrateful, as to neglect these consolations of the Spirit. If the table be sumptuously spread why should we be hungry? If the fountain flows so freely why should we be thirsty? Moreover, mayhap, if we wear a darksome countenance we may distress the weak ones in the family of God; it may be that we shall spread the infection of depression among our fellow believers, and this must not be. Let us wear our sackcloth on our loins if we must wear it, but let us not wave it in everybody's face, lest we offend against the generation of the Lord's people. Is it not clear from the Word, brethren, that we shall be damaged if we give way to apprehension and dismay? Is it not apparent that we are invigorated, equipped, and prepared for our Lord's use when we are strong in the Lord and the power of his might? Therefore let us breathe earnestly to God the desire that his everlasting consolation may be laid home to our spirits, and that our hearts may be comforted at this moment.

II. We shall now turn to the second point of our meditation, which is this: GOSPEL CONSOLATION IS MOST FREELY BESTOWED. I want, in the chief place, to call your attention to the manner in which all the way through the freeness of divine consolation is set before us by the apostle.

First, observe that the consolations bestowed upon believers are most free because *they are described as a gift*. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ

himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath *given us* everlasting consolation." The old proverb hath it, "Nothing is freer than a gift." Every blessing that we receive from God comes as a gift. We have purchased nothing: what have we to purchase it with? We have earned nothing: what work did we ever do that could deserve everlasting consolation from the hand of the great Lord? Comfort in Christ is an absolutely free, spontaneous gift of sovereign grace, given not on account of anything we have done, or ever shall do, but because the Lord has a right to do as he wills with his own; therefore doth he select unto himself a people, to whom the free gift of his consolation shall be given. If thou hast any comfort at this time, my brother, it is God's gift to thee. If thou dost triumph in God, it is God who hath given thee thy holy joy, therefore bless and praise him from whom such a boon has come.

The freeness of this gift is seen in every part of it. The consolation given us of God is very complete, but it is as manifestly free as it is evidently perfect. Notice its completeness, I pray you. It covers *the past* with these golden words, "which hath loved us": as for *the present*, it is enriched with this truth, "hath given us everlasting consolation"; and as for *the future*, it is glorified with this blessing, "and good hope through grace." Here is a triple comfort, a consolation in three worlds, and under each aspect it is a free favour. He "hath loved us"—why is this? Come, ye wise men, pry into the ancient past, and tell me why God loved his chosen. Stand and gaze as long as you will into the eternal mind, and say to yourself, why did God make this choice of love? The sole reply out of the excellent glory falls from Jesus' lips: "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Shall not the bridegroom elect his own bride? Shall not the King of kings dispense his favours as he wills? He hath loved us "from before the foundation of the world:" a love so ancient cannot have been born of any human cause. Eternal love is a flame enfolding itself; it borrows no fuel from without, but lives upon itself. He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" but why that everlasting love we cannot tell. Beloved, by divine love the mysterious past is made to glow with the glory of God: its light is like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Once when we looked back into the past we saw the blackness of our guilt, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged; but now we behold a silver stream of mercy flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and we track it to the eternal purpose of love and the covenant of grace. Gaze as you can into light ineffable, but even with the eye of faith all that you can discern in the ages which are past is this word, which hath a splendour about it beyond compare—the word "LOVE." In eternity the Lord loved us. Oh, how free is this! How much we owe for it! The past is bright with love, with love most free. As for the *present*, "he hath given us everlasting consolation." We have it now. Christ is his people's Christ to-day: the consolation of Israel even now. The pardon of sin is ours, the perfect righteousness of Christ is ours, life in Christ is ours, union to Christ is ours, marriage to Christ is ours. Glory with Christ shall be ours by-and-by, but even now we have the earnest of it in the Spirit which dwells within us, and shall be with us for ever. All this

s assuredly a gift: how could it be otherwise? We could never have enjoyed this everlasting consolation to-day if free grace and dying love had not brought it to us. Bless, then, the Giver. As for *the future*, what of hat? Dark lower the clouds, and the tempest mutters from afar, nd we tremble lest in the end of life, when physical force decays, we may e overtaken with a storm in the article of death: but this covers all, we have "good hope through grace." The Scriptures of truth have assured us that the great Shepherd will be with us in the valley of death-hade, and that after death there is a resurrection, and that with our risen body we shall behold the King in his beauty when he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth, and we shall in our perfect manhood dwell for ever in his glory. This is so good a hope that it fills all the future with music. This, too, is a gift. There is not a trace of legal claim in it; it comes not by way of reward, but of divine favour. Thus the past the present, the future are all rich with the Lord's own generous gifts, and in nothing can we trace a single consolation to anything but free grace.

Lest we should make any mistake about these consolations coming to us most freely, the apostle mentions One from whose hand they come, from whom nothing has ever come in other manner but that of manifest grace. He mentions "*our Lord Jesus Christ himself.*" Oh it charms me to think that he should comfort me! When Jesus Christ begins to draw near a man's soul his joy begins; but when the Lord sets himself down steadily to console his brethren, I warrant you it is done in heavenly style; for he will not fail nor be discouraged. He will wash our feet if the weariness be there; he will give his bosom for a pillow to our head if the pain be there. He hath said, "I will make all his bed in his sickness," so that if the woe comes from disease he will cheer us there. He will anoint our eyes with eye-salve if the eyes are failing, and bind up the broken heart if that be bleeding. Lest we fall he will put underneath us the everlasting arms, and lest we be wounded he will spread over us the shadow of his wing. He will be all to us that he is in himself: judge ye what that is. His whole being: his godhead in its grandeur, his humanity in its tenderness he hath given to us. He layeth himself out for us, and be ye sure of this, he will not leave us comfortless, he will come to us. He is such a blessed sympathiser in all grief, such a mighty helper in all distress, that if he come to our succour we may be sure that our deliverance will be accomplished. But, brethren, at the sight of our loving Lord we feel that it would be treason to impute his benefits to any motive but that of grace. Is he not full of grace and truth? The law came by Moses, not by Jesus. His coming was not to judge and to censure: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," much less did he send his Son to condemn his people. There will come a day of judgment, but just now the Son of God sits upon his throne to grant pardons, and to give grace to help in times of need: his throne is a throne of grace, and his sceptre is that of love. We know that the comforts of the gospel must be graciously free since they are brought to us by Jesus Christ himself.

Then the apostle solemnly adds, "*and God our Father.*" There seems to me to be a peculiar touch of sweetness about this. It is not "God the Father"—which notes his relation to Jesus, but *our* Father, which

sets forth his relation to us. We love God the Father; unto the Father be glory for ever and ever: but as "our Father" he comes nearer to us, and gladdens our hearts. Now, a father does not pay wages to his children, his gifts to them are freely bestowed out of the love of his fatherly heart. What father expects to be paid for what he does for his sons and daughters? Thus we see that the everlasting consolations of the gospel, coming to us because we are the children of God, are quite free from anything which makes them a hire or a debt, and they come to us in the freest possible manner, as spontaneous donations of our great Father, whose delight it is to give good gifts to them that ask him.

Cannot you look up, you desponding ones, at this moment, and cry, "Our Father"? Our first hymn greatly refreshed my spirit just now, for I felt very heavy till the Holy Ghost comforted me with it:

"If in my Father's love
I share a filial part,
Send down thy Spirit, like a dove,
To rest upon my heart."

and felt that I could urge that argument, and in my inmost heart I pleaded it before the Lord:—Oh, if I be indeed thy child and thou be a Father to me, then deal with me as with a son, and let me feel thy Spirit resting within my bosom, that I may know myself to be thine beyond a doubt. O how sweet to feel the Spirit's witness and to cry, "Abba, Father"! Now, beloved, the spirit of adoption is never a spirit of bondage or legality; it never boasts of human merit, but its one song is "free grace and dying love." May our Father's free favour make your hearts to sing concerning this, and I know that this will be your strain—

"Behold what wondrous grace
The Father hath bestow'd
On sinners of a mortal race
To call them sons of God!"

Look at the text again, and you will see how explicit Paul is upon one point. To make us see the freeness of those consolations which come to God's troubled people, he writes it, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, *which hath loved us*." Divine love is the foundation of our consolation. No everlasting consolation could have visited our hearts if the Father and the Son had not loved us. I always feel inclined to sit down when my ministry causes me to come across the great truth of God's love to his people: because it is not so much a truth to speak upon with the tongue as to enjoy in silence in the heart. I can fully understand that God should pity my misery; I can comprehend God's caring for my weakness; but I am filled with sacred amazement when I am told that he *loves* me. Loves me! What can there be in me for the Holy Ghost to love! Brother, what can there be in you that Jesus should set his heart on you? He has made us, and not we ourselves: does the potter fall in love with his own clay? Will he die to save a broken vessel? There were other creatures fairer far. Why were angels passed by? Wonder of wonders that the Lord should love us poor nobodies, defiled with sin, with such evil tempers and such strange natures; ah me, with such *estranged* natures! which is far worse.

That the Lord our God should *love* us, that Christ should love us so as actually to have died for us, outmiracles all the miracles of his power. Jesus so loved us that he espoused our nature, occupied our dwelling-place, the world; took our burden of sin, carried our cross, and laid in our grave! They say that love is blind: I will not say that our Redeemer's love is of that sort, far rather will I say that it must have been wonderfully quick-sighted love to have been able to perceive anything lovable in us. Yet is his love the source and fountain of all our mercies. He hath loved us. Question there can be none that this is free: for love is unpurchasable; if a man should give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned. Love goes not in the market, it knows nothing of price, or barter: it must go forth unbribed, unhired, or not at all, in any case; and far more in the instance of the eternal love of the great Father, and his only begotten Son. Price and purchase for divine love? Wherein would such an insinuation fall short of blackest blasphemy?

Yet again, observe that as if the apostle feared that we should get away from this doctrine of grace he added, "He hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope *through grace*." Some people do not like the sound of that word "grace." It is too Calvinistic. We do not care what you call it, but it is the very best word in the Bible next to the name of God our Saviour. It is from the grace of God that all our hope begins. Man as a rebel can never earn anything but damnation through his own merits: grace must reign, or man must die. Every blessing that can ever come to condemned sinners such as we are must come because God's great love wills it to come, because "he is gracious and full of compassion." All other roads are broken up; grace alone bridges the chasm, and makes a way for traffic between heaven and earth. Grace reigns in our spiritual comfort, and grace alone; let us glorify God for it.

Everlasting consolation is not a blessing given to us as the result of our own works. This is most clear from the last part of our text, for there it is asked that the Lord may comfort our hearts, not because we are stablished in every good word and work, but that we may be so. All the good works which adorn the Christian character are the result of God's grace, and not the cause of it. Grace is given us in order that we may serve God, not because we do serve God. To make us holy is the object of divine grace, but grace did not wait until it found us holy, or it would never have visited us.

To close this part of the subject I would remark that this is the reason why the consolations which God gives us are *everlasting*. Dwell on that word "everlasting". Do not suffer anyone to fritter away its meaning. You may safely forget that there are certain folks alive who declare that everlasting has not the meaning of endless duration, for it means that or nothing. We have too much personal interest involved in this word to allow it to be toned down into age-lasting or any other miserable sense. We should as soon think that the Bible meant the opposite of what it seems to do as believe that everlasting means something temporary. He has given us everlasting consolation, and the reason why it is everlasting is because it is founded on the grace of God. If it were built upon our merits it would stand upon a foundation of ice or mist; it would rest on

a shadow buttressed by a dream: but if God loved us out of pure grace, and if Jesus Christ has given us consolation out of pure love, and if our whole comfort rests upon the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus, then there is no reason why it should ever pass away unless God's grace can evaporate, which cannot be, since God changeth not, but must be for evermore the same. Our Lord Jesus changeth not, for he is the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Ah, you high-fliers, who derive a lofty comfort from your feelings, your happy sensations, your holy works, and your belief that sin is dead in you, fly away as much as you can, you will be brought down one of these days! Like Icarus in the Grecian fable, who flew so high that he melted the wax of his wings and fell, so will it be with all who venture aloft on wings of self-confidence. He who lies humbly at God's feet, conscious of his sin, and mourning over it, and resting for everything upon sovereign grace and free mercy in Christ Jesus, he may keep where he is with safety, for his hope shall never fail him. Let the Lord be magnified for this; he is our rock, and there is no unfaithfulness in him, and he that resteth in him shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end.

III. So far have I brought you; now for our closing point, which is a practical one. Since THESE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD'S LOVE HAVE BEEN SO FREELY BESTOWED UPON US THEY SHOULD LEAD US TO A LIFE OF HOLY BENEVOLENCE. We ought to be free in our giving to others, since God has been so free in his giving to us. As he has abounded toward us in infinite liberality we ought to abound towards all with whom we come in contact up to the full measure of our ability, in all love and kindness and mercy.

In every benevolent enterprise Christian men should take a hearty interest. Read that seventeenth verse—"Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in *every* good word and work." I am a man, and being a man, everything that concerns men concerns me. I am a Christian man, and as a follower of Christ, the Son of man, everything that can do good to my fellow-men is a matter in which I delight to take my share.

This should be done in direct actions as well as in words. Read—"Stablish you in every good word *and work*." Certain of the oldest manuscripts run "In every good work and word," and I suppose in our new translation we shall have it so, and very properly too. In this case work is probably first, and word next. Some Christian people think that "word" should be everything and work nothing, but the Scriptures are not of their mind. These professors speak a great deal about what they will do, talk a great deal about what other people ought to do, and a great deal more about what others fail to do; and so they go on with word, word, word, and nothing else but word. They do not get as far as "work," but the apostle put work first in this case, as much as to say, "whether you talk about it or not, *do it*. Be stablished in every good work even if you do not get so far as being capable of a multiplicity of words." Brethren, let us yoke word and work together: every good thing should command our advocacy and secure our aid to the full of our ability. Direct practical assistance should be rendered by us all, since our Lord loves not in word only but in deed and in truth.

This should be done without pressure. No one could lay constraint upon God to bless his people, no pressure was put upon Christ to redeem

is; everything as we have shown was spontaneous, sovereign, free. Even so should men give to God out of an overflowing heart. Give to him as a king giveth to a king. How does a king give? Why, as he likes, and that is the way to give, to give because you are delighted to give; not because you feel obliged to do it by being overlooked by others, but out of a royal heart which delights in liberal things. Shall you not do as you will with your own? How can a gracious heart better please itself than by doing good? Give as you would give to a king, for we never give our meaner possessions to royal personages; we give the best we have if we give them anything. Let it be so in all the services that we render to God; let him have our best, our noblest, our dearest possessions.

The particular case before us this morning is, to my mind, a very important one, and one which should greatly move all generous spirits. In this great city of near upon four millions of inhabitants, the provision of hospital accommodation is small to a painful degree. In those hospitals which will be helped by the collections of to-day, I think there are only 5,531 beds, or about one for 723 persons. Considering the liability of working men to disease and accident, and the great number of the poorer classes, this is a fearfully small preparation for possible necessity. But this is not the worst, for out of these 5,000 beds, as I gather from an admirable paper in *The Lancet*, there are never more than 3,232 in daily use, thus diminishing the supply to an appalling extent. These empty beds are very largely made so by the lamentable fact that the hospitals have not the means of using them. The depression in trade has been felt by our free hospitals to such an extent that they live from hand to mouth in a manner which is not honourable to one of the wealthiest cities in the world. The Hospital Sunday Collection has not yet come up to the proper mark, and it is time for ministers to say so, and instruct their people, who if they knew the need would promptly supply it. *The Lancet* wisely says that if the sermons of to-day could be preached in the hospitals themselves, the collections would be doubled. There are many objections to carrying out the suggestion, but I have no doubt the result would be as anticipated. Suppose me, then, to be preaching in one of the great wards and yourselves to be standing among the beds, I know those poor creatures lying near you writhing in pain, and those others grateful for the relief they have received, would plead much more forcibly than I can. The sight of suffering is the best argument with benevolence. Look at the rows of sick folk and let your heart be touched. As the service could not well be held in the hospital, *The Lancet* suggests that the ministers should spend Saturday in going over a hospital. I could not very well do that, but I have tried in my mind vividly to realise the scene, and I think most of you are quite as able to draw the picture as I am, for you have been there to see for yourselves, and some of you have been there as patients to partake for yourselves in hospital benefits. Picture the wards of mercy, and let every sick person there entreat you to help the funds of these admirable institutions. An exceedingly powerful plea to my mind arises from those empty beds. There they are, two thousand of them! Waiting to be couches of hope to the suffering. Alas, they cannot be filled because there is not the means for providing the people with food and nourishment while they are there. Sorrowful

necessity! I cannot endure to think of it. A bed for a sick man rendered useless by some one's meanness! Where is the niggard? Surely he is not here!

It would be even more painful to go to the homes where those persons who ought to occupy those empty beds are pining for the want of the hospital help, waiting the next turn—which turn may find them in the grave—but which turn would come to-morrow morning if funds were forthcoming. Must they lie there till they are beyond the reach of surgical help because the wealthy of this so-called Christian city cannot spare a little from their luxuries to furnish poor sick humanities with nutriment? O that one with a trumpet tongue could speak to our nobles, our merchants, our traders, our gentlemen of leisure, and bid them consider the sick poor. O that they all knew the exquisite luxury of doing good! I would say to employers, will you let these people lie and pine away for want of medical help, many of them your workmen whose strength has been spent in your trades and handicrafts? Pain is crushing them, and provision is made for their help and cure, as far as it can be made, but it is rendered useless by the want of money to bear the expenses of the patients. Is this to be always so? Is this to remain so for another year? Surely it shall not be.

I ask you, dear friends, according as God has entrusted you with this world's wealth, to help the hospitals. I do this with all the greater confidence, because you are believers in the doctrines of free grace. Give freely, for you have received freely. Remember that yesterday and to-day Jews, Catholics, Protestants, people of all sects have heartily joined in this common effort for suffering humanity, and if those who believe in the free grace of God are behind-hand, nay, if they are not among the foremost in the race, it will be to the dishonour of the glorious gospel which they profess. The Lord accept your offerings as you now present them! I hear the sound of your gold and silver already, for you are eager in the work of mercy. The collectors are a little too rapid in their work, but I will not restrain them, for it is a fit ending to my discourse that you should hasten to pass from word to work. In so doing may God bless you. Amen.

(The Collections amounted to £257.)

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Thess. i., ii. 1—4, iii. 13—17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—728, 694, 248.

On June 22 the first stone of the Girls' Orphanage will be laid. The cost will be £11,000 for houses and schools for 250 children. Help from God's servants will be greatly valued by C. H. SPURGEON, Nightingale Lane, Balham.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SHEEP BEFORE THE SHEARERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."—Isaiah liii. 7.

IT is very suggestive of the way in which our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place that we are here in the context compared to sheep: "All we like sheep have gone astray," and then he who comes to take our place is compared to a sheep also,—"As a sheep before her shearers is dumb." It is wonderful how complete was the interchange of positions between Christ and his people, so that what they were that he became, in order that what he is they may become. See how closely he became like his brethren. I can very well understand how we should be like to the sheep and he to the shepherd; but I should never have dared to coin the comparison which likens *him* to a sheep. I dare try to explain, but I should never have dared to utter it if I had not found it here. To liken the Son of the Highest to a sheep would have been unpardonable presumption had not his own Spirit employed the condescending figure.

Though the emblem is very gracious, it is by no means novel, for our Lord had been long before Isaiah's day typified in the lamb of the Passover. To call him "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," is a very frequent mode of explaining to us how he made expiation for our transgressions: and indeed even in his glory he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, before whom angels and the redeemed are bowing. I delight to bring before your minds the singular communion between yourselves and Jesus: you "like sheep," and he "as a sheep;" you like sheep in your wanderings, he like a sheep in his patience; you most like sheep—I mean myself and you—most like sheep for foolishness, but he only like a sheep for the sweet submissiveness of his spirit, so that beneath the shearer's hand "he openeth not his mouth."

I. I will not keep you with any preface, but invite you to consider, first, OUR SAVIOUR'S PATIENCE, under the figure of a sheep before her shearers. Let us view our Lord's patience by the help of the Holy Spirit.

I do not think I will preach to you, but I will set before you as open

a window as I can, and ask you to look in, and behold the Lamb of God. Our Lord was brought to the slaughter, and brought in another sense by another figure to the shearers: to the slaughter that he might die; to the shearers that he might be shorn of his comfort, and of his honours, shorn even of his good name, and shorn at last of life itself. While he was before the slaughtermen he was quiet as a lamb that is led: when he was under the shearers he was as silent as a sheep that lieth to be shorn. You know the story of how patient he was before Pilate, and Herod, and Caiaphas, and on the cross. You have no record of his groaning, or of his uttering any exclamation as though impatient of the pain and shame which he received at the hands of wicked men; you have not one bitter word, one hard speech. Pilate cries, "Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee"; and Herod is bitterly disappointed, for he expected to see some miracle wrought by him. All that he does say is like the bleating of a sheep, only so infinitely more full of meaning. He utters sentences like these,—"For this purpose was I born, and came into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth," and, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He is all patience and silence.

Now remember, first, that our Lord was dumb and opened not his mouth *against his adversaries*, and did not accuse one of them of cruelty or injustice. They slandered him, but he replied not; false witnesses arose, but he answered them not. He did not say, like Paul, "God shall smite thee, thou white wall." I am not going to condemn Paul, but I certainly am not going to commend him. In contrast with the Master how differently he behaves! Jesus lets not fall a word against anybody, though they are doing everything that malice can invent against him. For Pilate he even makes a half apology, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." One would have thought he must have spoken when they spat in his face. Might he not have said, "Friend, why doest thou this? For which of all my works dost thou insult me?" But the time for such expostulations was over. When they smote him on the face with the palms of their hands, it would not have been wonderful if he had said, "Wherefore do you smite me so?" But no; he speaketh not. He brings no accusation to his Father. He had only to have lifted his eye to heaven, or to have felt a wrathful wish, and legions of angels would have chased out the ribald soldiery; one flash of a seraph's wing and Herod had been eaten by worms, and Pilate had died the death he well deserved as an unjust judge. The hill of the cross might have become a volcano's mouth to swallow up the whole multitude who stood there jesting and jeering at him: but no, nothing of the kind, there was no display of power, or rather there was so great a display of power over himself that he did not use his might against his bitterest foes; he restrained Omnipotence itself with a strength which never can be measured, for his mighty love availed even to restrain divine wrath. He kept back the natural indignation which must have come over his spirit against the injustice, the falsehood, the shameful malice of his foes; he held it all back, and was patient, meek, [redacted]ilent to the end.

[redacted]Again, as he did not utter a word against his adversaries, so he did [redacted]ay a word *against any one of us*. You remember how Zipporah

said to Moses, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me," as she saw her child bleeding; and surely Jesus might have said to his church, "Thou art a costly spouse to me, to bring me all this shame and bloodshedding." But he giveth liberally, he openeth the very fountain of his heart, and he upbraideth not. He had reckoned on the uttermost expenditure, and endured the cross, despising the shame.

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

No doubt he looked across the ages; for that eye of his was not dim, even when bloodshot on the tree, and he might have looked at your indifference and mine, at our coldness of heart, and unfaithfulness, and he might have left on record some such words as these: "I am suffering for those who are utterly unworthy of my regard; their love will be a very poor return for mine. Though I give my whole heart for them, how lukewarm is their love to me! I am sick of them, I am weary of them, and it is woe to me that I should be laying down my heart's blood for such a worthless race as these my people are." But there is not a hint of such a feeling, not a trace of it. He is dumb before the shearers. They shear away everything from him, they strip him to the last rag, till, as he hangs upon the tree, he says, "I can tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me," and yet he murmurs not against our cruel sins. He was stripped because we were naked, that he might cover our nakedness, and yet he makes no complaint against us, nor utters a single syllable by way of regret that he had entered upon so severe an enterprise, and that he was paying so heavy a price. No. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame," and not a syllable is uttered that looks like murmuring, or wishing that he had not commenced the work.

And again, as there was not a word against his adversaries, nor a word against you nor me, so there was not a word *against his Father or of repining at the severity of the punishment of our sin.* You know how Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," and yet to me he seems to have been treated with strange leniency, that first red-handed man. Sometimes you and I have cried, when under a comparatively light grief, "Surely my grief cannot be weighed in the scales, nor measured in the balances." We have thought ourselves hardly done by. We have dared to cry out against God, "My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure." But not so the Saviour; in his mouth were no complaints. Yet it is quite impossible for us to conceive how the Father pressed and bruised him. How often did that olive press revolve; how was the screw tightened again and again and again, to bring the stones together, to bruise out of him his very life! "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He alone of all mankind could truly say, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me"; yet there is not a complaint, for "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a cry of grief, but it is not a cry of repining. It shows manhood in its weakness, but not

manhood in revolt. There is the cry of grief, but there is not the voice of rebellion there, nor even of despair. We have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, but where are the lamentations of Jesus? Jesus wept, and Jesus sweat great drops of blood, but he never murmured nor felt rebellion in his heart.

Beloved, I feel as if I could not preach upon this, but ask you just to look in there, within the open door, and see Jesus like the lamb waiting in the shambles: not struggling, when the knife is at his throat, but waiting there to die, and dying with his own consent; laying down his life willingly for our sakes. Look again, and see your Lord and Saviour lying down stretched out in passive resignation beneath the shearers, as they take away everything that is dear to him, and yet he openeth not his mouth. I see in this, in Christ our Lord, *complete submission.* He gives himself up; there is no reserve about it. The sacrifice did not need binding with cords to the horns of the altar. How different from your case and mine? He stands there willing to suffer, to be spit upon, to be shamefully entreated, and to die, for in him there was a complete surrender. There was no reserve about his body, soul, or spirit. He was wholly given up to do the Father's will, and work out our redemption. There was a complete self-conquest too. In him no faculty arose to plead for liberty, and ask to be exempted from the general strain; no limb of the body, no portion of the mind, no faculty of the spirit started, but all submitted: a whole Christ giving up his whole being unto God, that he might perfectly offer himself without spot for our redemption.

There was not only self-conquest, but there was *a complete absorption in his work.* The sheep, lying there, thinks no more of the pastures, it just gives itself up to the shearer. And Christ forsook his Father that he might be one flesh with us; that was at the very first, and therefore he came here and was joined unto us at Bethlehem. He kept up the union to the end, and hence he was one with us in death. The zeal of God's house did eat him up in Pilate's hall as well as everywhere else, for there he witnessed a good confession. No thought had he but for the clearing of the divine honour, and the salvation of God's elect. His powers were concentrated into one desire, and the passion of love to men made his heart hot within him till it melted and ran out in a stream of love and blood. Oh, brethren, I wish we could ever get to this, to submit our whole spirit to God, to resign ourselves completely, to learn self-conquest, and then the delivering up of conquered self entirely to God: the absorption of it all in one desire, the burning up of the sacrifice till it should be like Elias' sacrifice on Carmel, when the fire came down from heaven, and consumed not only the bullock, but the wood and the stones of the altar, and licked up the water that was in the trenches, and the whole sacrifice went up in one vast cloud of fire and smoke to heaven, a whole burnt offering to the living God. This is just what one could wish might happen unto us, even as it happened unto the Lord's Christ on that day.

The wonderful serenity and submissiveness of our Lord are still better set forth by our text, if it be indeed true that sheep in the east are even more docile than with us. Those who have seen the noise and roughness of many of our washings and shearings will hardly believe the

stimony of that ancient writer Philo-Judæus when he affirms that ıe sheep came voluntarily to be shorn. He says: "Woolly rams laden ith thick fleeces put themselves into his hands (the shepherd's) to ave their wool shorn, being thus accustomed to pay their yearly tribute) man, their king by nature. The sheep stands in a silent inclining osture, unconstrained under the hand of the shearer. These things ıay appear strange to those who do not know the docility of the sheep, ut they are true."

II. Thus I have very feebly indeed set before you, dear friends, the atience of our beloved Master. Now I want you to follow me, in the :cond place, to VIEW OUR OWN CASE UNDER THE SAME METAPHOR S THAT WHICH IS USED IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD.

Did not I begin by saying that because we were sheep he deigns to)mpare himself to a sheep? Now, just go back again. Our Lord as a sheep under the shearers, and as he is so are we also in this orld. Though we shall never be offered up like a lamb in the temple y way of expiation, yet the saints for ages were the flock of slaughter, s it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are :counted as sheep for the slaughter!" Jesus sends us forth as sheep ı the midst of wolves, and we are to regard ourselves as living sacrifices, :ady to be offered up. I dwell, however, more particularly upon the :cond symbol: we can go, and do go, as sheep under the shearers' hands. want to speak to you a little to-night about this figure, as I have no)ubt it has been wrought out in the lives of many here present, and ıay perhaps be wrought out at this present time, and in future days in ıe rest of you.

Just as a sheep is taken by the shearer, and its wool is all cut off, so)th the Lord take his people and shear them, taking away all their)mforts at times, all their earthly comforts, and leaving them bare as ıorn sheep. I wish when it came to our turn to undergo this shearing)eration it could be said of us as of our Lord, "As a sheep before her ıearers, so he openeth not his mouth." I fear that we open our mouths great deal, and make no end of complaint. But now to the figure. 'e need to be reconciled to the shearing process, and to that end I ıall speak at this time.

First, remember that *a sheep rewards its owner for all his care and ouble by being shorn.* There is nothing else that I know of that a ıeep can do. It yields food when it is killed, but while it is alive the ıe payment that the sheep can make to the shepherd is to yield its)ece in due season. And so, dear friends, a sheep, if it were intelli-)nt, might well be reconciled to be shorn because it would say, "The ıepherd deserves to be rewarded for his pains, and so I am content to) down to the shearing house, to yield my fleece that he may be paid." Some of God's people can give to Christ a tribute of gratitude / active service, and they should do so gladly every day of their lives; ıt many others cannot do much in active service, and about the only ward they can give to their Lord is to give up their fleece by suffering hen he calls upon them to suffer; submissively yielding to be shorn of ıeir personal comfort when the time comes for patient endurance. nd, mark you, those who serve Christ actively ought to feel that what ey do in that way is all too little, and if they can supplement it by

passive service, by yielding themselves to be shorn as others are, they ought to rejoice that in this way they can show forth to Christ the more abundant gratitude for what he has done for them.

Here comes the shearer; he takes the sheep and begins to cut, cut, cut, cut, taking away the wool by wholesale. Affliction is often used as the big shears. The husband is taken away, or perhaps the wife, little children are taken away, property is taken away, health is taken away. Sometimes the shears even cut off your good name; slander comes, everything seems to come and remove your consolations, till all comforts vanish. Well, this is your shearing time, and it may be that you are not able to glorify God to any very large extent except by undergoing this process; and if this be the fact, do you not think that you and I, like good sheep of Christ, should surrender cheerfully and say, "I lay myself down with this intent, that thou shouldst take from me anything and everything, and do what thou wilt with me; for I am not mine own, I am bought with a price, and so I would cheerfully yield to anything by which thou mayest get some honour out of me. Thou great Shepherd of the sheep, clip and shear me as thou wilt, so long as thou seest some sort of return for all thy tender care and bitter woe.

Notice that the sheep is itself *benefited by the operation of shearing.* Before they begin to shear the sheep the wool is long and old, and every bush that catches it, every thistle with which it gets entangled, every briar that it passes by, tears off a bit of the wool, and the sheep looks ragged and forlorn. If the wool were left on it when the heat of summer came it would not be able to bear itself, it would be so overloaded with clothing that it would be as we ourselves are when we have kept on our borrowed wool, our flannels and broadcloths, too late. After the heat of summer has come we have to throw off our thick clothes: we cannot bear them; so the sheep is the better for losing its wool, it would become a hindrance to it and not a comfort if it could retain it. So brethren, when the Lord shears us, we do not like the operation any more than the sheep do; but first, it is for *his glory*, and secondly, it really is for *our benefit*, and therefore we are bound most willingly to submit. There are many things which we should have liked to have kept which, if we had kept them, would not have proved blessings, but curses. Remember, a stale blessing is a curse. The brazen serpent preserved as a relic became a snare to the people till it was broken up and called Nehushtan, a piece of brass. The manna, though it came from heaven, was only good so long as God's command made it a blessing, but when they kept it over its due time it bred worms and stank, and then it was no blessing. I do believe that many persons if they could would keep their blessings stinking in the house till they filled their cupboards with worms. But God will not have it so. Up to a certain point for you to be wealthy was a blessing; it would not have been a blessing any longer, and so the Lord took your riches away. Up to that point your child was a boon, but it would have been no longer so, and therefore it fell sick and died. You may not be able to see it, but it must certainly be, that God, when he withdraws a blessing from [illegible] people, takes it away because it would not be a blessing any longer. [illegible]member this text, "No good thing will I withhold from them that

walk uprightly," and if that be true, then this is true, "No really good thing will I take away from them that walk uprightly," for that is something more than withholding.

When the wool goes, it is because the sheep does not really want it, it is better without it. Mr. Jonatt, who has written upon sheep, tells us, "As the spring advances the old wool is no longer needed to defend the animal from the cold, and it becomes, from its weight and its warmth, a nuisance rather than a comfort." When the Lord Jesus Christ sends affliction and trial to shear us, while we hope to glorify him in the process, it is also good for us that we should have it cut away. Though we do not like it at the time, it is working our lasting good.

You who know something about sheep will remember that before sheep are shorn *they are always washed.* Were you ever present at the scene when they drive them down to the brook, to the place where they have dammed up the stream to make a pool for washing? There the men stand in rows, while the shepherd stands in the water breast high. The sheep are driven down, and the men seize them, throw them into the water, keeping their faces above water, and swill them round and round and round to wash the wool before they clip it off. You see them come out on the other side frightened to death, poor things, wondering whatever is coming, no doubt under the impression that they are going to be drowned, and when they escape they stand bleating on the other shore as one by one they finish their swim. I want to suggest to you, brethren, that whenever a trial threatens to overtake you, before it actually arrives you should ask the Lord to sanctify you. If he is going to clip the wool, ask him to wash it before he takes it off; ask to be cleansed in spirit, soul, and body. That is a very good custom Christian people have of asking a blessing on their meals before they eat bread. Do you not think it is even more necessary to ask a blessing on our troubles before we get into them? Here is your dear child likely to die; will you not, dear parents, meet together and ask God to bless the death of that child, if it is to happen. Here are things going badly in trade: would it not be a good thing to hold a special meeting in the family, and ask God to bless your declining business to you? There is a bad crop; the harvest fails; would it not be well to say—"Lord, sanctify this poverty, this loss, this year's bad harvest: cause it to be a means of grace to us. The evil is coming, and ere it comes we would ask a blessing on it." Why not ask a blessing on the cup of bitterness as well as upon the cup of thanksgiving? Ask to be washed before you are shorn, and if the shearing must come, let that be your chief concern. "Lord, if thou art coming to take my wool, make it clean before thou takest it: wash what thou takest, and wash me also, and I shall be clean; yea, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

After the washing, and the sheep has dried, the sheep actually *loses what was its comfort.* It is thrown down, and you see the shearers; you wonder at them and pity the poor sheep. The sheep is losing what was its comfort. It will happen to you that you shall lose what is your comfort. Will you recollect this? Because the next time you receive a fresh comfort you must say, this is a loan. Oh sheep, there is no wool on your back but what will come off; child of God, there is no

comfort in your possession but what will either leave you, or you will leave it. Nothing is our own except our God. "Why," says one, "not our sin?" That was our own, I own that, but Jesus has taken that upon himself, and we call it no more our own. There is nothing our own but our God, and there is no blessing that we have but what, when the Lord sends it to us, it is on the agreement that we shall have it only for a time. It is held on lease, terminable at the will of the Lord. We foolishly consider that our mercies belong to us, and when the Lord takes them away we half grumble. If you borrow anything of a neighbour, you ought not to send it back with tears, or say, "I am sorry you recall it." A loan, they say, should go laughing home, and so should what God loans us. We should rejoice. He gives, and, blessed be his name, he takes but what he gave; he does not take to himself anything of ours, he takes to himself what he lent us. All our possessions are but favours borrowed here to be returned anon. So as the sheep yields up its wool and loses its comfort, so must we yield up all our comforts one by one; or if they remain with us till we die, we shall part with them then, we shall not take so much as one of them across the stream of death. Our spiritual riches are of another kind, and they are laid up already in heaven, but of all things here below we shall take not a thread with us.

The shearers, when they are taking the wool off the sheep, *take care not to hurt the sheep:* they clip as close as they can, but they do not cut the skin. If possible they will not make a gash or a wound, or draw blood, even in the smallest degree. When they do make a gash, it is because the sheep does not lie still; but a careful shearer has bloodless shears. Of this Thomson sings in his Seasons, and the passage is so good an illustration of the whole subject that I will adorn my discourse with it:—

> "How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!
> What softness in its melancholy face,
> What dumb complaining innocence appears!
> Fear not, ye gentle tribes! 'tis not the knife
> Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved;
> No, 'tis the tender swain's well guided shears,
> Who having now, to pay his annual care,
> Borrow'd your fleece, to you a cumbrous load,
> Will send you bounding to your hills again."

Be ye sure that when the Lord is clipping and shearing us he will not hurt us; he will take our comforts away, but he will not really injure us, or cause a wound to our spirits. Hath he not said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." If ever the shears do make us bleed, it is because we kick, because we struggle. If we were patient as the sheep, we should just lie still, and the process would cost us very little pain. What pain there was would become delightful, seeing we had submitted ourselves entirely to the divine will. Pain grows into pleasure when you come to feel that God wills it; you are glad to suffer because he ordains you should. It is the kicking and the struggling that make the shearing work at all hard, but if we are dumb before the shearers no hurt can come. The Lord may clip wonderfully close: I have known him

clip some very close, who did not seem to have a bit of wool left, for they were stripped entirely, just as Job was when he cried, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," but still he was able to add, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

You will notice about sheepshearing that the shearers always *shear at a suitable time.* It would be a very wicked, cruel, and unwise thing to begin sheepshearing in winter time. There is a proverb which talks about God "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb." It may be so, but it is a very wicked practice to shear lambs while winds need tempering. Sheep are shorn when it is warm, genial weather, when they can afford to lose their fleeces, and are all the better for being relieved of them. As the summer comes on sheepshearing time comes. Have you ever noticed that whenever the Lord afflicts us he selects the best possible time? There is a prayer that he put into his disciples' mouths, "Pray that your flight be not in the winter": the spirit of that prayer may be seen in the seasonableness of our sorrows. He will not send us our worst troubles at our worst times. I have frequently noticed, and I have treasured it up with gratitude, that when I have had strong inclinations to sin, the opportunity has not come; that if ever I have had opportunities of sinning temptingly put before me, then I have had no inward longing towards the sin. When the inward desire and the opportunity meet, that is a very dangerous case indeed, but the Lord keeps his people from that. So if you notice, if your soul is depressed the Lord does not send you a very heavy burden; but reserves such a load for times when you have had joy in the Lord, and that joy has been your strength. It has got to be a kind of feeling with us that when we have much delight a trial is near, but when sorrow thickens deliverance is approaching. The Lord does not send us two burdens at a time, or if he does he sends double strength. It is an observation which I suppose no one would make but an Irishman, and I am not one, that you never knew the west wind blow when the east wind is troubling you. You never knew the wind blow from the north when it was blowing from the south. As a rule, except it be in a tornado or a cyclone, the wind blows from some one quarter. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." He knows how to prevent our suffering more tribulation than we can bear. He shears us, but not to injure us; he clips away the wool, but sends the genial temperature so that we may be able to flourish under our loss. Let that be noted, and let God be thanked for it.

There is another thing to remember. When God takes away our mercies he is ready to supply us with more. It is with us as with the sheep, *there is new wool coming.* Whenever the Lord takes away our earthly comforts with one hand, one, two, three, he restores with the other hand six, twelve, scores, a hundred; he takes away by spoonfuls, and he gives by cartloads: we are crying and whining about the little loss, and yet it is necessary in order that we may be able to receive the great mercy. Yes, it will be so, we shall yet have cause for rejoicing, "joy cometh in the morning." There is always as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and when one set of favours is taken away there are more mercies to come. The great sea of divine love has bigger

fish in it than ever we have taken out of it. If we have lost one position, there is another position for us; if we have been driven out of one place, there is yet a refuge for us. God opens a second door when he shuts the first. If he takes away the manna, as he did from his people Israel, it is because there is the corn of Canaan for them to live upon. If the water of the rock did not follow the tribes any longer, it was because they could drink of the Jordan, and of the brooks that flowed in that land of hills and valleys. Yes, there is new wool coming; do not therefore fret at the shearing. I have given these thoughts in brief, that we may come to this last word.

III. Let us, in the third place, endeavour to IMITATE THE EXAMPLE OF OUR BLESSED LORD WHEN OUR TURN COMES TO BE SHORN. Let us be dumb before the shearers, submissive, quiescent, even as he was.

I have been giving, in everything I have said, a reason for so doing. I have shown that it glorifies God, rewards the Shepherd, and benefits ourselves. I have shown that he measures and tempers our affliction, and sends the trial at the right time. I have shown you in many ways that we are wise to submit ourselves, as the sheep does to the shearer, and the more completely we do so the better. Oh, brethren, we shall be happy when we have done with self: it will be all well with us whatever we may have gone through, when we learn that verse of Toplady's:

> "Sweet to lie passive in Thy hand,
> And know no will but thine."

I know we struggle a good deal, and we make excuses for struggling. Sometimes we say, "Oh, this is so painful, I cannot be patient! I could have borne anything else; but not this." When a father is going to correct his child does he select something that is pleasant? Oh dear no. The painfulness of the chastisement is the essence of it, and even so the bitterness of your sorrow will be a blessing to you. By the blueness of the wound the heart will be made better. Do not rebel because your trial seems strange. It is as good as saying, "If I have it all my own way I will not rebel, but if everything does not please me I will not endure it." Sometimes we complain because of our great weakness. "Lord, were I stronger I would not mind this heavy loss; I am like a sere leaf driven of the tempest." But who is to be the judge of the suitability of your trial? You or God? Since the Lord judges this trial to be suitable to your weakness, depend upon it it is so. Lie still, lie still, lie quite still! "Alas," you say, "my grief comes from the most cruel quarter; this trouble did not arise directly from God, it came through my cousin or my brother, who ought to have treated me with gratitude. I could have borne it if it had not come in that way; it was not an enemy, then I could have borne it." Then let me tell you it is not a traitor after all. God is at the bottom of all your tribulation,—look through the second causes to the great First Cause. It is a great mistake when we fret over the human instrument which smites us, and forget the hand which uses the rod. If I strike a dog with a stick, he bites my stick—that is because he is stupid; if he thought a little he would bite *me*, or else take the blow and bow in obedience. Now, you must not begin biting the stick. After all it is God that uses that staff, though it be of ebony or of blackthorn. It is well to have done with all

this picking and choosing, and to leave the whole matter in the hand of infinite wisdom. A sweet singer has put this matter very prettily, let me quote the lines:—

"But when my Lord did ask me on what side
I were content,
The grief whereby I must be purified,
To me was sent,

"As each imagined anguish did appear,
Each withering bliss
Before my soul, I cried, 'Oh! spare me here,
Oh, no, not this!'

"Like one that having need of, deep within,
The surgeon's knife,
Would hardly bear that it should graze the skin,
Though for his life.

"Nay, then, but He, who best doth understand
Both what we need,
And what can bear, did take my case in hand,
Nor crying heed."

This is the pith of my sermon: oh sheep, yield thyself, yield thyself! Oh believer, yield thyself, lie passive, lie passive, struggle not! There is no use in struggling, for our great Shearer, if he means to shear, will do it; if he means to send us trials and troubles he will not spare for our crying, he will not mind our whining, he will do his will and carry out his purpose. What is the good, therefore, of rebellion? Did not I say just now that the sheep, by struggling, might be cut by the shears! So you and I, if we struggle against God, we shall get two troubles instead of one, and after all there is not half so much trouble in a trouble as there is in our kicking against the trouble. The eastern ploughman when he ploughs has a goad, and pricks the ox to make it move along; he does not hurt it much, but suppose the ox flings out the moment it touches him, he drives the goad into himself, and bleeds. So is it with us, if we kick out against divine providences we shall get a sore wound, much more than was ever needful; we shall endure much more pain than would have come if we had yielded to the divine will. What is the use of kicking and struggling then, you fretful ones? You cannot make one hair white or black. You that are troubled, rest with us, for you cannot make shower or shine, rain or fine weather, with all your groaning. Did you ever bring a penny into the till by fretting, or put a loaf on the table by complaint, or get a shilling in your pocket by murmuring? Murmuring is wasted breath, and fretting is wasted time. But to lie still in the hand of God brings a blessing to the soul. I wish myself that I could be more quiet, calm, and self-possessed, but an active mind is apt to turn upon itself to its own wounding, when all the cares of a church and a great work press heavily. I long to cry habitually, "Lord, do what thou wilt, when thou wilt, as thou wilt with me, thy servant: appoint me honour or dishonour, wealth or poverty, sickness or health, exhilaration or depression, and I will take all right gladly from thy hand." A man

is not far from the gates of heaven when he is fully submissive to the Lord's will. Though heaven is uphill the road to it is downhill, and when a man has gone down so much that he is dead to self, he is not far from entering into that eternal life where God shall be all in all, in bliss for ever and ever. You that have been shorn have, I hope, received a word of comfort to-night through the ever blessed Spirit of God. May God bless it to you. Oh that the sinner, too, would submit himself to God, yield himself up, and rebel no longer! Submit yourselves unto God, let every thought be brought into captivity to him, and the Lord send his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah liii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—758, 752, 703.

TO THE READERS OF THE SERMONS.

Nightingale-lane, Balham, June 21, 1880.

DEAR FRIENDS,

The first stones of the Girls' Orphanage at Stockwell will be laid to-morrow, June 22. The buildings will consist of houses for 250 children, and schools above them. The contract is for £11,100, but extras occur in most erections, and there may be some in this case, though they will be as few as possible. Already we have at this date about £7,000, and if the Lord shall continue to move the hearts of other sermon-readers as some have been moved, the remainder will come in with a joyous bound. I am greatly cheered by the hundreds of loving letters which I have received: an abundant reward for all the toil of preparing these sermons for the press. This orphanage work is not a labour for myself, even in the least degree, but for poor widows and orphans, and therefore I with boldness ask God's servants who are profited by the sermons to unite with me in it. When this part of our enterprise is carried out there will be dining-hall, infirmary, &c. to build, and then there will be 500 children to keep. Help one, help all, help often, if you feel it to be a worthy cause. In any case the Lord will not let his servant be ashamed or confounded when unselfishly bearing this blessed burden.

Your hearty friend,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MAHANAIM, OR HOSTS OF ANGELS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."—Genesis xxxii. 1, 2.

"And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness."—2 Samuel xvii. 27—29.

LET us go even unto Mahanaim and see these great sights. First, let us go with Jacob and see the two camps of angels, and then with David to observe his troops of friends.

Jacob shall have our first consideration.

What a varied experience is that of God's people! Their pilgrimage is over a shifting sand: their tent is ever moving, and the scene around them ever changing. Here is Jacob at one time contending for a livelihood with Laban, playing trick against trick in order to match his father-in-law; then he prospers, and determines to abide no more in such servitude; he flies, is pursued, debates with his angry relative, and ends the contention with a truce and a sacrifice. This unseemly family warfare must have been a very unhappy thing for Jacob, by no means tending to raise the tone of his thoughts, or sweeten his temper, or ennoble his spirit. What a change happened to him when the next day, after Laban had gone, Jacob found himself in the presence of angels. Here is a picture of a very different kind: the churl has gone and the cherubs have come, the greedy taskmaster has turned his back and the happy messengers of the blessed God have come to welcome the patriarch on his return from exile. It is hard to realise to the full the complete transformation.

Such changes occur in all lives; but, I think, most of all in the lives of believers. Few passages across the ocean of life are quite free from storm, but the redeemed of the Lord may reckon upon being tossed with tempest even if others escape. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yet trials last not for ever; clear shining comes after rain.

Change worketh ever. We pass from storm to calm, from breeze to hurricane: we coast the shores of peace, and anon we are driven upon the sandbanks of fear. Nor need we be surprised: for were there not great changes in the life of our Lord and Master? Is not his life as full of hills and valleys as ours possibly can be? We read of his being baptized in Jordan, and there and then visited by the Spirit, who descended upon him like a dove,—then was his hour of rest. Who can tell the restfulness of Jesus' spirit when the Father bare witness concerning him, "This is my beloved Son"? But we read directly afterwards, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." From the descent of the Holy Ghost to dire conflict with the devil is a change indeed! But another change followed it, for when that battle had been fought out, and the triple temptation had been tried upon our Lord in vain, we read again, "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." In a short space our Lord's surroundings had changed from heavenly to diabolical, and again from satanic to angelic. From heaven to the manger, from walking the sea to hanging on the cross, from the sepulchre to the throne—what changes are these! Can we expect to build three tabernacles and tarry in the mount when our Lord was thus tossed to and fro?

Beloved, you will certainly find that the world is established upon the floods, and is therefore ever moving. Never reckon upon the permanence of any joy: thank God, you need not dread the continuance of any sorrow. These things come and go, and go and come; and you and I, so far as we have to live in this poor whirling world, must be removed to and fro as a shepherd's tent, and find no city to dwell in. If this happen not to our habitations it will certainly happen in our feelings. From of old "the evening and the morning were the first day," and "the evening and the morning were the second day,"—the alternation of shade and shine, of setting and rising, are from the beginning. Dawn, noon, afternoon, evening, darkness, midnight, and a new morning follow each other in all things. So must it be: there is a needs be for clouds and showers, and morning glories, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," when we shall be fitted to bask in the beams of everlasting noon.

In the case before us we see Jacob in the best of company. Jacob, not cheated in Mesopotamia, but honoured in Mahanaim; not trying to outwit Laban, but gazing upon celestial spirits. He was surrounded by angels, and he knew it. His eyes were open, so that he saw spirits who in their own nature are invisible to human eyes. He became a seer, and was enabled by the inward eye to behold the hosts of shining ones whom God had sent to meet him. It is a great privilege to be able to know our friends and to discern the hosts of God. We are very apt, indeed, to realize our difficulties, and to forget our helps: our allies are all around us, yet we think ourselves alone. The opposition of Satan is more easily recognized than the succour of the Lord. Oh to have eyes and hearts opened to see how strong the Lord is on our behalf.

Jacob had just been delivered from Laban, but he was oppressed by another load: the dread of Esau was upon him. He had wronged his brother; and you cannot do a wrong without being haunted by it afterwards. He had taken ungenerous advantage of Esau, and now, many, many years after it his deed came home to him, and his conscience made

him afraid. Notwithstanding that he had lived with Laban so long, his conscience was sufficiently vigorous to make him tremble because he had put himself into a wrong position with his brother: had it not been for this he would have marched on to his father Isaac's tent with joyful foot. Dreading his brother's anger, he was greatly distressed and troubled: these angels came to bring him cheer by helping him to forget the difficulties round about him, or lose his dread of them by looking up and seeing what defence and succour awaited him from on high. He had but to cry to God, and Esau's four hundred men would be met by legions of angels. Was not this good cheer? Have not all believers the same? Greater is he that is for us than all they that are against us.

If this morning I shall be enabled by the Holy Spirit to uplift the minds of the Lord's tried people from their visible griefs to their invisible comforts I shall be glad. I beg them not to think exclusively of the burden they have to carry, but to remember the strength which is available for the carrying of it. If I shall cause the timorous heart to cease its dread, and to trust in the living God who has promised to bear his servants through, I shall have accomplished my desire. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, and therefore no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, and even the arch-enemy himself shall be bruised under our feet.

In treating of Jacob's experience at Mahanaim we will make a series of observations.

First, *God has a multitude of servants, and all these are on the side of believers.* "His camp is very great," and all the hosts in that camp are our allies. Some of these are visible agents, and many more are invisible, but none the less real and powerful. The great army of the Lord of hosts consists largely of unseen agents, of forces that are not discernible except in vision or by the eye of faith. Jacob saw two squadrons of these invisible forces, which are on the side of righteous men. "The angels of God met him," and he said, "This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim (two camps)"; for there a double army of angels met him.

We know that *a guard of angels always surrounds every believer.* Ministering spirits are abroad, protecting the princes of the blood royal. They cannot be discerned by any of our senses, but they are perceptible by faith, and they have been made perceptible to holy men of old in vision. These bands of angels are *great in multitude;* for Jacob said, "This is God's host": a host means a considerable number, and surely the host of God is not a small one. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." We do not know what legions wait upon the Lord, only we read of "an innumerable company of angels." We look abroad in the world, and calculate the number of persons and forces friendly to our Christian warfare; but these are only what our poor optics can discover: the half cannot be told us by such means. It may be that every star is a world, thronged with the servants of God, who are willing and ready to dart like flames of fire upon Jehovah's errands of love. If the Lord's chosen could not be sufficiently protected by the forces available in one world, he has but to speak or will, and myriads of spirits from the far-off regions of space would come thronging forward to guard the children of their king. As the stars of the sky, countless

in their armies, are the invisible warriors of God. "His camp is very great." "Omnipotence has servants everywhere." These servants of the strong God are *all filled with power:* there is not one that fainteth among them all, they run like mighty men, they prevail as men of war. A host is made up of valiant men, veterans, troopers, heroes, men fit for conflict. God's forces are exceedingly strong: nothing can stand against them. Whatever form they take, they are always potent, even when God's host is made up of grasshoppers, cankerworms, and palmerworms, as in the Book of Joel, none can resist them, and nothing can escape them. They devoured everything; they covered the earth; and even darkened the sun and moon. If such be the case with insects, what must be the power of angels? We know that they "excel in strength," as they "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." Rejoice, O children of God! There are vast armies upon your side, and each one of the warriors is clothed with the strength of God.

All these agents work in order, for it is God's host, and the host is made up of beings which march or fly, according to the order of command. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path." All the forces of nature are loyal to their Lord. None of these mighty forces dreams of rebellion. From the blazing comet which flames in the face of the universe to the tiniest fragment of shell which lies hidden in the deepest ocean cave, all matter yields itself to the supreme law which God hath settled. Nor do unfallen intelligent agents mutiny against divine decrees, but find their joy in rendering loving homage to their God. They are perfectly happy, because consecrated; full of delight, because completely absorbed in doing the will of the Most High. Oh that we could do his will on earth as that will is done in heaven by all the heavenly ones!

Observe that in this great host they were *all punctual to the divine command.* Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God *met* him. The patriarch is no sooner astir than the hosts of God are on the wing. They did not linger till Jacob had crossed the frontier, nor did they keep him waiting when he came to the appointed rendezvous; but they were there to the moment. When God means to deliver you, beloved, in the hour of danger, you will find the appointed force ready for your succour. God's messengers are neither behind nor before their time; they will meet us to the inch and to the second in the time of need; therefore let us proceed without fear, like Jacob, going on our way even though an Esau with a band of desperadoes should block up the road.

Those forces of God, too, were *all engaged personally to attend upon Jacob.* I like to set forth this thought: "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God *met him*;" he did not chance to fall in with them. They did not happen to be on the march, and so crossed the patriarch's track; no, no; he went on his way, and the angels of God met him with design and purpose. They came on purpose to meet *him:* they had no other appointment. Squadrons of angels marched to meet that one lone man! He was a saint, but by no means a perfect one; we cannot help seeing many flaws in him, even upon a superficial glance at his life, and yet the angels of God met *him.* Perhaps in the early morning, as he rose to tend his flocks, he saw the skies peopled with shining ones who quite eclipsed the dawn. The heavens were vivid with descending lustres, and

the angels came upon him as a bright cloud, descending, as it were, upon the patriarch. They glided downward from those gates of pearl, more famed than the gates of Thebes. They divided to the right and to the left and became two hosts. Perhaps the one band pitched their camp behind, as much as to say, "All is right in the rear, Laban cannot return; better than the cairn of Mizpah is the host of God." Another squadron moved to the front as much as to say, "Peace, patriarch, peace with regard to Esau, the red hunter, and his armed men: we guard you in the van." It must have been a glorious morning for Jacob when he saw not one, but many morning stars. If the apparitions were seen in the dead of night, surely Jacob must have thought that day was come before its time. It was as if constellations mustered to the roll call, and clouds of stars came floating down from the upper spheres. All came to wait upon Jacob, on that one man: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him"; but in this case it was to one man with his family of children that a host was sent. The man himself, the lone man who abode in covenant with God when all the rest of the world was given up to idols, was favoured by this mark of divine favour. The angels of God met *him*. One delights to think that the angels should be willing, and even eager, troops of them, to meet one man. How vain is that voluntary humility and worshipping of angels which Paul so strongly condemns. Worshipping them seems far out of the question; the truth lies rather the other way, for they do us suit and service: "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation?" They serve God's servants. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son"? But this he has said, first to the Only-Begotten, and then to every believer in Christ. We are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, and these ministering ones have a charge concerning us: as it is written, "they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

I have shown you that believers are compassed about with an innumerable company of angels, great in multitude, strong in power, exact in order, punctual in their personal attention to the children of God. Are ye not well cared for, oh ye sons of the Most High!

Those forces, though in themselves invisible to the natural senses, are manifest to faith at certain times. There are times when the child of God is able to cry, like Jacob, "The angels of God have met me." *When do such seasons occur?* Our Mahanaims occur at much the same time as that in which Jacob beheld this great sight. Jacob was entering upon a more separated life. He was leaving Laban and the school of all those tricks of bargaining and bartering which belong to the ungodly world. He had breathed too long an unhealthy atmosphere; he was degenerating; the heir of the promises was becoming a man of the world. He was entangled with earthly things. His marriages held him fast, and every year he seemed to get more and more rooted to Laban's land. It was time he was transplanted to better soil. Now he is coming right away; he has taken to tent life. He has come to sojourn in the land of promise, as his fathers had done before him. He was now to confess that he was seeking a city, and meant to be a pilgrim till he found it. By a desperate stroke he cut himself clear of entanglements; but he must have felt lonely, and as one cast adrift. He missed all the associations

of the old house of Mesopotamia, which, despite its annoyances, was his home. The angels come to congratulate him. Their presence said, "You are come to this land to be a stranger and sojourner with God, as all your fathers were. We have, some of us, talked with Abraham, again and again, and we are now coming to smile on you. You recollect how we bade you good-bye that night, when you had a stone for your pillow at Bethel; now you have come back to the reserved inheritance, over which we are set as guardians, and we have come to salute you. Take up the non-conforming life without fear, for we are with you. Welcome! welcome! we are glad to receive you under our special care." Then was it true to Jacob, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." This brotherhood of angels must have been an admirable compensation for the loss of the fatherhood of that churlish Laban. Anything we lose when we leave the world, and what is called "society," is abundantly made up when we can say, "We have come unto the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and unto an innumerable company of angels."

Again, the reason why the angels met Jacob at that time was, doubtless, because he was surrounded with great cares. He had a large family of little children; and great flocks and herds and many servants were with him. He said himself, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." This was a huge burden of care! It was no light thing for one man to have the management of all that mass of life and to lead it about in wandering style. But see, there are two companies of angels to balance the two companies of feeble ones. If he has two bands to take care of he shall have two bands to take care of him; if he has double responsibility he shall have double assistance. So, brothers and sisters, when you are in positions of great responsibility, and you feel the weight pressing upon you, have hope in God that you will have double succour, and be sure that you pray that Mahanaim may be repeated in your experience, so that your strength may be equal to your day.

Again, the Lord's host appeared when Jacob felt a great dread. His brother Esau was coming to meet him armed to the teeth, and, as he feared, thirsty for his blood. In times when our danger is greatest, if we are real believers, we shall be specially under the divine protection, and we shall know that it is so. This shall be our comfort in the hour of distress. What can Esau do with his four hundred men now that the hosts of God have pitched their tents and have assembled in their squadrons to watch between us and the foe? See ye not the horses of fire and chariots of fire around about the chosen servant of God? Jacob ought to have felt calm and quiet in heart; I suppose he was while he saw his protectors. Alas! as soon as he lost sight of them, poor Jacob was depressed in spirit again about his brother Esau, lest he should slay the mother with the children. Such is the weakness of our hearts! But let us not fall into the grievous sin of unbelief. Are we not without excuse if we do so? In times of great distress we may expect that the

forces of God will become recognizable by our faith, and we shall have a clearer sense of the powers on our side than ever we had before. O Holy Spirit, work in us great clearness of spiritual sight!

And, once again, when you and I, like Jacob, shall be near Jordan, when we shall just be passing into the better land, then is the time when we may expect to come to Mahanaim. The angels of God and the God of angels, both come to meet the spirits of the blessed in the solemn article of death. Have we not ourselves heard of divine revealings from dying lips? Have we not heard the testimony so often, too, that it could not have been an invention and a deception? Have not many loved ones given us assurance of a glorious revelation which they never saw before? Is there not a giving of new sight when the eyes are closing? Yes, O heir of glory, the shining ones shall come to meet you on the river's brink, and you shall be ushered into the presence of the Eternal by those bright courtiers of heaven, who on either side shall be a company of dear companions when the darkness is passing, and the glory is streaming over you. Be of good cheer: if you see not the hosts of God now you shall see them hereafter, when the Jordan shall be reached, and you cross over to the promised land.

Thus I have mentioned the time when these invisible forces become visible to faith; and there is no doubt whatever that *they are sent for a purpose*. Why were they sent to Jacob at this time? Perhaps the purpose was first to revive an ancient memory which had well-nigh slipped from him. I am afraid he had almost forgotten Bethel. Surely it must have brought his vow at Bethel to mind, the vow which he made unto the Lord when he saw the ladder, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Here they were: they had left heaven and come down that they might hold communion with him. I like the dream at Bethel better than the vision of Mahanaim for this reason, that he saw the covenant God at the top of the ladder: here he only sees the angels. Yet is there a choice pearl in this latter sight, for whereas at Bethel he only saw angels ascending and descending, he here sees them on the earth by his side, ready to protect him from all ill. How sweetly do new mercies refresh the memory of former favours, and how gently does new grace remind us of old promises and debts. Brother, does not your Mahanaim point to some half-forgotten Bethel? Judge for yourself. Should our glorious God give you at this time a clear view of his divine power and of his covenant faithfulness, I pray that the sight may refresh your memory concerning that happy day when first you knew the Lord, when first you gave yourself up to him, and his grace took possession of your spirit.

Mahanaim was granted to Jacob, not only to refresh his memory, but to lift him out of the ordinary low level of his life. Jacob, you know, the father of all the Jews, was great at huckstering: it was the very nature of him to drive bargains. Jacob had all his wits about him, and rather more than he should have had, well answering to his name of "supplanter." He would let no one deceive him, and he was ready at all times to take advantage of those with whom he had any dealings. Here the Lord seems to say to him, "O Jacob, my servant, rise out of this miserable way of dealing with me, and be of a princely mind." Such should have been the lesson of this angelic visit, though it was

ill learned. Jacob was prepared to send off to Esau, and call him "My Lord Esau"; he was ready to cringe and bow, and call himself his servant, and all that. He went beyond the submissiveness which prudence suggests into the abject subjection which is born of fear. The vision should have led Jacob to stand upon higher ground. With bands of angels as his body-guard, he had no need to persist in his timorous, pettifogging policy. He might have walked along with the dignified confidence of his grandsire Abraham. There is something better in this life after all than policy and planning: faith in God is grander far. A coward's scheming ill becomes the favourite of heaven. Why should he fear who is protected beyond all fear? Esau could not stand against him, for Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts, was on his side. O for grace to live according to our true position and character, not as poor dependents upon our own wits or upon the help of man, but as grandly independent of things seen, because our entire reliance is fixed upon the unseen and eternal. Jacob as a mere keeper of sheep has great cause to fear his warlike brother, but as the chosen of God and possessor of a heavenly guard he may boldly travel on as if no Esau were in existence. All things are possible with God. Let us, then, play the man. We are not dependent on the things that are seen. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live. Cursed is he that trusteth in man. Trust in God with all your heart. He is your infinite aid. Do the right, and give up calculations. Plunge into the sea of faith. Believe as much in the invisible as in the visible, and act upon your faith. This seems to me to be God's object in giving to any of his servants a clearer view of the powers which are engaged on their behalf.

If such a special vision be granted to us *let us keep it in memory.* Jacob called the name of that place Mahanaim. I wish we had some way in this western world, in these modern times, of naming places, and children, too, more sensibly. We must needs either borrow some antiquated title, as if we were too short of sense to make one for ourselves, or else our names are sheer nonsense, and mean nothing. Why not choose names which should commemorate our mercies? Might not our houses be far more full of interest if around us we saw memorials of the happy events of our lives? Should we not note down remarkable blessings in our diaries, to hand down to our children? Should we not tell our sons and daughters, "There God helped your father, boy;" "thus and thus the Lord comforted your mother, girl;" "there God was very gracious to our family"? Keep records of your race! Preserve the household memoranda! I think it is a great help for a man to know what God did for his father and his grandfather, for he hopes that their God will be his God also. Jacob took care to make notes, for he again and again named places by the facts which there were seen. Jacob named Bethel, and Galeed, and Peniel, and Mahanaim, and other places, for he was a great name giver. Nor were his names forgotten, for hundreds of years after good King David came to the same spot as Jacob, and found it still known as Mahanaim, and there the servants of God of another kind met him also.

This brings me to my second text; for angels did not meet David, but

ring creatures of another nature met him, who answered the purpose
f David quite as well as angels would have done. So just for a few
inutes we will dwell upon that second event which distinguished Ma-
anaim. Turn to the Second Book of Samuel, seventeenth chapter,
venty-seventh verse. David came to Mahanaim, and there was met by
any friends. He stood upon the sacred spot, accompanied by his hand-
il of faithful friends, fugitives like himself. There was not an angel
bout that day apparently, yet secretly there were thousands flying
round the sorrowing king. Who is this that comes? It is not an
ngel, but old Barzillai. Who is this? It is Machir of Lodebar. They
ring with them honey, corn, butter, sheep, great basins by way of
aths, and cooking utensils, and earthen vessels to hold their food; and
ok, there are beds too, for the poor king has not a couch to lie upon.
hese are not angels, but they are doing what angels could not have
one, for Gabriel himself could hardly have brought a bed or a basin.

Who is yonder prominent friend? He speaks like a foreigner. He is
n Ammonite. What is his name? Shobi, the son of Nahash, of
abbah, of the children of Ammon. I have heard of those people:
ey were enemies were they not—cruel enemies to Israel? That man
ahash, you recollect his name; this is one of his sons. Yes! God can
rn enemies into friends when his servants require succour. Those
at belong to a race that is opposed to Israel can, if God will it, turn
be their helpers. The Lord found an advocate for his Son Jesus
Pilate's house,—the governor's wife suffered many things in a dream
ecause of him. He can find a friend for his servants in their perse-
utor's own family, even as he raised up Obadiah to hide the prophets
nd feed them in a cave: the chamberlain to Ahab himself was the pro-
ector of the saints, and with meat from Ahab's table were they fed. It
trikes me that Shobi the Ammonite came to David because he owed his
fe to him. Rabbah of Ammon had been destroyed, and this man,
robably the brother of the king, had been spared: this act of mercy he
emembered, and when he found David in trouble he acted gratefully
nd came down from his highland home with his men, and with his sub-
tance. Many a good man has found gracious help in his time of need
rom those who have received salvation by his means. If we are a bless-
ng to others they will be a blessing to us. If we have brought any to
hrist, and they have found the Saviour by our teaching, there is a
eculiar tie between us, and they will be our helpers. Shobi of Rabbah
f Ammon will be sure to be generous to David, because he will say, "It
s by him I live; it is through him that I found salvation from death."
f God blesses you in the conversion of any, it may be that he will raise
hem up in your time of need, and send them to help: at any rate, either
y friends visible or invisible, he will cause you to dwell in the land, and
erily you shall be fed. Here comes another person we have heard
f before, Machir of Lodebar. That is the large farmer who took
are of Mephibosheth. He seems to have been a truly loyal man, who
tuck to royal families, even when their fortunes were adverse. As he
ad been faithful to the house of Saul so was he to David. We have
mong us brethren who are always friends of God's ministers: they love
hem for their Master's sake, and adhere to them when the more fickle
pirits rush after new comers. Happy are we to have many such

adherents. They helped the preacher's predecessor; they like to talk of the grand old man who ruled Israel in the olden times, and they are not tired of it, but they are the entertainers of the present leader, and are equally hearty in their help. God fetches up these brethren at the moment they are wanted, and they appear with loaded hands.

Here comes Barzillai, an old man of fourscore, and as the historian tells us, "a very great man." His enormous wealth was all at the disposal of David and his followers, and "he provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim." This old nobleman was certainly as useful to David as the angels were to Jacob, and he and his coadjutors were truly a part of God's forces. The armies of God are varied: he has not one troop alone, but many. Did not Elisha's servants see the mountain full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire? God's hosts are of varied regiments, appearing as horse and foot, cherubim and seraphim, and holy men and holy women. Those who are of the church of God below are as much a part of the host of God as the holiest angels above. Godly women who minister unto the Lord do what they can, and angels can do no more.

On this occasion Mahanaim well deserved its name, because the help that came to David from these different persons came in a most noble way, as though it came by angels. The helpers of David showed their fidelity to him. He was driven out of his palace and likely to be dethroned; but they stood by him and proved that they meant to stand by him. Their declaration was in effect, "Thine are we, thou son of Jesse, and all that we have." Now was the time of his need, and now he should see that they were not fine weather friends; but such as were true in the hour of trial. See their generosity! What a mass of goods they brought to sustain David's troops in the day when they were hungering and thirsting. I need not give you the details; the verses read like a commissariat roll of demands. Every actually necessary form of provision is there. How spontaneous was the gift! David did not demand: they brought before he asked. He had not to send round his sergeants to levy upon the outlying villages and farms; but there were the good people ready-handed with all manner of stores. Their thoughtfulness was great too, for they seem to have thought of everything that was wanted, and besides, they said, "The people is hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." The heartiness of it all is most delightful. They brought their contributions cheerfully and joyfully, else they would have brought after a meagre sort, and with less variety of gifts.

I infer from this that if at any time a servant of God is marching onward in his Master's work, and he needs assistance of any sort, he need not trouble about it, but rest in the Lord, for succour and help will surely come, if not from the angels above, yet from the church below. Will you look at Solomon's Song, sixth chapter and thirteenth verse, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies," or *Mahanaim;* for that is literally how it stands in the Hebrew. In the church of God, then, we see the company of Mahanaim: the saints are the angels of God on earth as the angels are his hosts above. God will send these upon his errands to comfort and sustain his servants in their times of need. Go on, O David, at the bidding of thy Lord, for

his chosen servants here below will count it their delight to be thine allies, and thou shalt say of them "this is God's host!"

And now, to close. While I have shown you God's invisible agents, and God's visible agents, I want to call to your mind that in either case, and in both cases, *the host is the host of God:* that is to say, the true strength and safety of the believer is his God. We do not trust in the help of angels; we do not trust in the church of God, nor in ten thousand churches of God put together, if there were such, but in God himself alone. Oh, it is grand to hang on the bare arm of God; for there hang all the worlds. The eternal arm is never weary, nor shall those who rest on it be confounded. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." I said last Thursday night to you that faith was nothing but sanctified common sense; and I am sure it is so. It is the most common-sense thing in the world to trust to the trustworthy, the most reasonable thing in the world to take into your calculations the greatest power in the world, and that is God, and to place your confidence in that greatest power. Yea, more, since that greatest power comprehends all the other powers,—for there is no power in angels, or in men, except what God gives them: it is wise to place all our reliance upon God alone.

The presence of God with believers is more certain and constant than the presence of angels or holy men. God hath said it,—"Certainly I will be with thee." He hath said again, "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee." When you are engaged in Christ's service you have a special promise to back you up,—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." What are you afraid of then? Begone all trembling. Let feeble hearts be strong. What can stagger us? "*God is with us.*" Was there ever a grander battle cry than ours—the Lord of hosts is with us? Blessed was John Wesley to live by faith, and then to die saying, "The best of all is, God is with us." Shrink? Turn your backs in the day of battle? Shame upon you! You cannot, if God be with you; for "if God be with us, who can be against us?" or if they be against us, who can stand for an hour?

If, then, God is pleased to grant us help by secondary causes, as we know he does—for to many of us he sends many and many a friend to help in his good work—then we must take care to see God in these friends and helpers. When you have no helpers, see all helpers in God; when you have many helpers, then you must see God in all your helpers. Herein is wisdom. When thou hast nothing but God, see all in God: when thou hast everything, then see God in everything. Under all conditions stay thy heart only on the Lord. May the Spirit of God teach us all how to do this. This tendency to idolatry of ours, how strong it is. If a man bows down to worship a piece of wood or stone, we call him an idolater; and so he is: but if you and I trust in our fellow-men instead of God, it is idolatry. If we give to them the confidence that belongs to God, we worship them instead of God. Remember how Paul said he did not consult with flesh and blood: alas, too many of us are caught in that snare. We consult far more with flesh and blood than with the Lord. The worst person I ever consult with at all

is a person who is always too near me. The Lord deliver me from that evil man, myself. The presence of the Lord Jesus is the star of our night and the sun of our day, the cure of care, the strength of service, and the solace of sorrow. Heaven on earth is for Christ to be with us, and heaven above is to be with Christ.

I can ask nothing better for you, brethren, than that God may be with you in a very conspicuous and manifest manner all through this day, and right onward till days shall end in the eternal day. I do not ask that you may see angels: still, if it can be, so be it. But what is it, after all, to see an angel? Is not the fact of God's presence better than the sight of the best of his creatures? Perhaps the Lord favoured Jacob with the sight of angels because he was such a poor, weak creature as to his faith; peradventure if he had been perfect in his faith he would not have needed to see angels. He would have said, "I need no vision of heavenly spirits, for I see their Lord." What are angels? They are only God's pages to run upon his errands; to see their Lord is far better. The angels of God are not to be compared with the God of angels. If my confidence is in him that he is my Father, and that Jesus Christ has become the brother of my soul, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in me according to his own word, what need I care, although no vision of the supernatural should ever gladden my eyes? Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. "We walk by faith, not by sight," and in that joyous faith we rest, expecting that in time and to eternity the power of God will be with us, either visibly or invisibly, by men or by angels. His arm shall be lifted up for us, and his right arm shall defend us.

My heart is glad, for I too have had my Mahanaim, and in this my hour of need for the work of the Lord to which he has called me, I see the windows of heaven opened above me, and I see troops of friends around me. For the Orphanage now to be commenced I see providence moving. Two camps are around me also, and therefore do I preach to you this day of that which I have seen and known. May the angel of the covenant be ever with you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xxxi. 43—55; xxxii. 1, 2; 2 Samuel xvii. 27—29; Psalm xxiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 34, 674.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD GLORIFIED BY CHILDREN'S MOUTHS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

In connection with the Centenary of Sabbath Schools.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."—Psalm viii. 2.

THIS psalm sings of the grandeur of God as seen in creation. Who has not been impressed with the sight of the starry sky, and the moon walking in her brightness? Truly, God is great! Who can stand at night and gaze upward to yonder distant worlds without saying, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." The psalm with equal vigour treats of the condescension of God, which is all the better seen when we have a view of his greatness and glory. It is not for us to stoop; we are so low already. We sometimes use the word condescension in reference to man; but worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow-worms as to be capable of real condescension; that belongs to God alone. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Because of this divine condescension great honour is put upon man by God, and the psalm sings of it, telling of the exaltation of man, who in his original was made a little lower than the angels, but by God's gentleness has been made great, and crowned with glory and honour. Hence the inspired poet sings of the glory of God in man; for he never thinks of extolling man; he only means to say that God is glorious on account of the great things which he has done in and for such a poor creature as man is. So when he has said that man is made to be the viceroy of God over this earth, and is set over the works of God's hands, he concludes, not by praising man, but by reverently singing, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Mark right well the greatness of God, stooping to the littleness of man and glorifying itself thereby,—the stupendous grandeur of the highest bowing down to the lowest, and uplifting it into a place hard by itself, and so getting to itself abundant renown.

This morning our subject is the power of God displayed in human

weakness—strength out of babes' mouths: the way he glorifies himself by using the very least, and causing them to show forth his praise to the confusion of his adversaries.

There is a glory of God to be seen in creation, but in redemption there are peculiarly bright manifestations. In creation there was no opposition. When God framed this world there was no opposing force to fight against him: "He spake, and it was done." Absolute nothingness was no hindrance to the creation "in the beginning," neither were chaos and darkness resisting forces in the after framing of the world. "Let there be light," said God, and there was light. He speaks life, and things live; no trace of rebellion is seen. It is in the sphere of moral and spiritual things that "the enemy" is met with, and here is a labour worthy of a god—to overthrow this enemy, and still the evil voice which curses the sons of men. It is in conquering the opposition of the powers of evil that God gets to himself a glory more remarkable than that which he obtains by the greatest feats of creative power.

I. So our first thought is, that THERE IS A CONFLICT. Our text speaks of "enemies," and of "the enemy and the avenger." We know who the enemies are. Are they not the seed of the serpent? Are they not the men of this world, the children of darkness? The enemies of God are all men who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds; all who have not been turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." God has—alas that we should have to say it!—many enemies; and, above all, there is *the* enemy, that leading spirit, the "prince of the power of the air," who hath dominion over the children of disobedience, and over those apostate angels whom he seduced into mutiny, so that they revolted with him from beneath the standard of God: the devil and Satan is the enemy who contends against the cause of truth and love, which is the cause of God. He is spoken of as "the avenger" because he seeks to revenge himself on God. Through his own sin and folly he was expelled from heaven; the "son of the morning" became the prince of darkness by his own wilful deed, and he wanders up and down the universe of God, seeking to take revenge upon the just and holy Judge for the sentence which he has passed upon him. Ever there rages a tremendous battle between good and evil, between God and this avenger, and the evil powers associated with him. This battle rages from day to day, and will never cease till the Lord hath put all enemies under the feet of his glorious Son, who is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Victory shall crown the strife between good and evil, and the cry shall be heard, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

This strife began,—I hesitate to conclude the sentence,—for the origin of evil is not revealed; but the first historic circumstance we know of was the revolt of the angels who kept not their first estate. How they fell we think we know; but to a large extent our notions are, as a rule, drawn rather from poetical imagination than from positive history; but we do know that the devil was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth (1 John viii. 44), and that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (2 Peter ii. 4).

Satan carried the warfare into this world at the fall. Finding a happy

pair in Eden, he assumed a serpent's form and seduced them with a lie, leading them to partake of the fruit of which their God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." From that fell moment the conflict has never ceased throughout the whole human family, and you find everywhere the seed of the serpent in conflict with the "seed of the woman." God leads the armies of the right and the true against the spiritual wickedness which maintains the throne of wrong and falsehood. The serpent's seed has continued to fight against the Lord Jesus and against his chosen ones, using all sorts of weapons against them: by lying and slandering, by false doctrine, by soft temptations, by cruel persecutions, by death itself, the enemies have sought to destroy the children of the living God. It is a battle royal here below, even as it was above; for we read, "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." The day shall come when there shall be no place found for evil upon earth; but till then the god of this world seeks to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that are in him, and we must wrestle with him until we prevail.

On God's part this conflict is mainly carried on by moral and spiritual means. He does use other means at times, and he will in the end use all the resources of nature for the overthrow of his adversaries. Remember the song of the Red Sea where God used the great deep to destroy his foes: even now I hear the jubilant voices of the maidens as they answer one another saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." For the most part, however, this battle is not with weapons of nature, but with weapons of grace, and as far as we have to do with it, it is never with the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood; for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," though they are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The warfare of which we speak is the battle of good against evil, of right against wrong, of holiness against sin; in a word, of love against hate; and God uses the weapons of his truth, of his gospel, of the love of man, and especially of the sweet life and divine power of the Holy Spirit, to bring men to the feet of Jesus Christ, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things," that he might reign over them, and "reconcile them unto God, even the Father." This strife goes on every day around us and within us, and you and I are taking one side or the other in it. We are either enemies to God by nature, or we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son"; we are under the banner of "the Avenger," or else we follow the standard of the Redeemer—one of these two. I invite you at the outset of our discourse earnestly to ask yourselves on whose side you are. "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Art thou for God and for his Christ, or art thou still at enmity with thy Maker, alienated from God by wicked works? With this fact we have opened our discourse—there is a conflict.

II. Secondly, in this conflict THE WEAPONS ARE VERY SINGULAR. What are those weapons? The text replies, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Bring hither you sweet babe, and let us look into its lovely face! See that little mouth—it challenges

a kiss; and note with joy that God may use that little mouth as his conquering weapon against the devil. By men's mouths God's warfare is carried on, and all mouths that have ever spoken for him were once the mouths of "babes and sucklings." I have seen many ancient cannon upon which were moulded in bronze the words—"The last argument of kings." Yes, but the gracious arguments of the King of kings are sent home by a human mouth; these mouths are fashioned and framed on purpose to hurl against the enemy the hot shot of the gospel. Of our Lord Jesus himself we read, "He went forth conquering and to conquer," and it is written concerning him, "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." O mouth of a little child, it seems strange that out of thee should come the great strength of God which shall silence his enemies; and yet so it shall be. "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." It was the publication of the God-given word by human tongues which won the victory. The tongue is the glory of man's frame, and by it the glory of God is exceedingly manifested, and his foes are baffled.

It must greatly anger Satan to think that his craft is not met by craft, nor his clever devices by the wisdom of the world, but that God uses the foolishness of preaching to overthrow him. When our Lord sent out his apostles he did not commission them to assemble squadrons of soldiers, but he bade a tongue of fire sit on each one of them: he did not charge them to establish his religion by the authority of earthly princes, and seek for it the endowments of the state, but he gave them the endowment of the Holy Ghost, and the power to speak his gospel. In them was fulfilled the promise made to Ezekiel, "I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them, and they shall know that I am the Lord."

> "What gifts, what miracles he gave!
> And power to kill, and power to save!
> Furnish'd their tongues with wondrous words,
> Instead of shields, and spears, and swords.
>
> "Thus arm'd, he sent the champions forth,
> From east to west, from south to north;
> 'Go, and assert your Saviour's cause;
> Go, spread the mystery of his cross.'"

Already the testimony of feeble men has been used as the great power of God to subdue the nations to himself. Satan's kingdom has been shaken and the empire of Jesus extended by the gracious words which have proceeded out of human mouths, mouths which once were those of sucklings. Seest thou there, fiend of hell, the armoury of God? Dost thou see, in yonder infant-class, the weapons which the Lord is preparing against thee? The child that sucks at its mother's breast is born to smite thee with his words, and ere long, when the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, he shall batter down thy high places with his proclamation of the gospel. O smiter of the human race, the youngest, weakest, feeblest of the sons of Adam shall yet tread thee under foot. God shall make use of children's mouths to vanquish and silence the enemy and the avenger.

How are these singular weapons used? These strangely soft, yet sharp, feeble, yet mighty, weapons—how are they used? They smite the enemy by *prayer*. Children pray while they are children, and, blessed be God, their little pleadings are heard in heaven. I like to remember the words of Luther when things were going very badly. He went into a room and found a number of children in prayer, and he exclaimed, "It is well, for the children are praying for us: God will be sure to hear them." And so he will, brethren: he will not let the cries of Samuels and Timothies remain unheard. Thus, from the heavenward side, the prayers uttered by children's mouths will bring prosperity to the great cause. As these children grow older it is by their mouths that they shall bombard and batter the power of the enemy from the ramparts of prayer, and so shall bring an overthrow upon evil and error, and God's word shall be triumphant. O blessed power of prayer, nothing can stand against thee! The man, the child, the babe who knows but how to pray shall certainly prevail with God, and "still the enemy and the avenger."

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try,"

and yet it is one of the most effectual forms of assault against the powers of darkness.

These little mouths, too, shall be used for *praise;* and that is another powerful blow against the avenger; for whenever we praise God we cast down the pride of the great enemy. Praise glorifies God, and that is what Satan cannot bear. In proportion as God is glorified he feels himself degraded, and therefore it is a blessed thing to magnify the Lord. Little children, when they are rightly taught, early praise the Messiah, and, as they grow up, with deeper voices, and fuller volume of sound, but perhaps not even then with truer heart, they praise and bless the God of their fathers. The mouths of babes and sucklings are used by God to lower the pride of his adversaries, while they cry "Hosannah!" and sing the praise of Jesus' name.

Nor is this all, for out of man's mouth God sends forth *testimony* by his Holy Spirit, and this is the sharpest blow of all. The enemy dreads nothing so much as witness-bearing to the gospel, for he knows that it pleaseth God "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Under the head of testimony I would include all sorts of speech concerning our Lord Jesus and the gospel of our salvation, whether it proceeds from the mouths of men, women, or children. The testimony of Jesus is strength, however feeble may be the voice which utters it. Whoever publishes the salvation of Jesus Christ is, with his mouth, smiting the enemy. When they that fear the Lord speak often one to another about the glory of God; when they tell again and again "the old, old story, of Jesus and his love," then is God out of human mouths stilling the enemy and the avenger.

How sweet to think, dear brethren and sisters, that we never know what one child's mouth can do! One would like to have seen little George Whitefield when first he began to prattle. Who would have thought that the mouth of such a youngster would ultimately set two nations on fire by its zealous declaration of the truth? I should like to

have seen John Wesley, when he was a little child, on the knee of that remarkable woman, "the mother of the Wesleys"—who would have thought that he would rouse the masses as he did? Out of the mouths of little George Whitefield and little John Wesley—out of those two babes' mouths—how grandly did the Lord smite the adversary! Aha! Aha! O adversary! to be overcome by behemoth or leviathan might make thee angry; but to be smitten out of infants' mouths causes thee to bite the dust in utter dishonour. Thou art sore broken, now that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" thou art put to shame. Mouths that pray, and praise, and publish salvation, are the Lord's pieces of ordnance, with which he defeats his adversaries in the great battle of salvation.

His Son is the Word; but these mouths supply the voices by which the word is sounded forth in the ears of men. Jesus is not made known except through his people; they are his heralds, who cry, "Behold the Lamb." This agency is "mighty through God," and so it was ordained to be, for it is according to the divine ordinance that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings strength should come. The word of God, though it be spoken by the feeblest mouth, is essential strength, a thing of majesty and might. The Hebrew has it, "Hast thou *founded* strength"; as if the very foundation of the strength of the church lay, under God, in the mouths that God moves to speak. The preaching of the gospel is at the bottom of everything: holy teachings are the battle axe and weapons of war of the gospel campaign. The Septuagint, as quoted by our Lord, translates it—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise." From children's mouths there will come the highest form of adoration. Praise perfected, which goes up before the Lord, does not come from cherubim and seraphim, but from human lips, which once were those of infancy. Lips that press the mother's breast are the instruments of music which yet shall be attuned to the sweetest of heaven's own songs. Glory be to his name for this! Let us bless him that he graciously chooses such poor creatures to be the noblest of his choristers above.

III. Having dwelt long enough upon this point, let us notice, in the third place, that THE WARRIORS IN THIS WARFARE ARE VERY SPECIAL. The weapons are singular, and the warriors themselves are remarkable, for the text says that God perfects his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. We may read this spiritually with the warrant of Scripture; for, first, such as are like babes in spirit are God's chosen. Their character cannot be better described than by calling them "newborn babes who desire the unadulterated milk of the word." Hear ye, dear brethren, your Master's own words as he speaks in the eleventh chapter of the gospel according to Matthew: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Childlike men and women, simple-hearted, honest, trustful, loving spirits are the chosen of God. Those who are so very wise, and know such a great deal, that they feel bound to cavil, pick holes, and raise idle questions—these are not God's elect. He does not choose the wise, but the foolish things; those who do not know, nor pretend to know, but take their instruction from the Divine Teacher. As to

mere knowledge which puffs up so many, there are some things which believers do not wish to know, some difficulties which they do not desire removed; they are glad to have ample room and verge enough for faith, and though this causes wise people to despise them, they care little for that, since their names are written in heaven, and it is out of their mouths, weaklings as they are, that God has ordained strength. Nay, more than this, not only are such the Lord's chosen, but such are his witnesses. I want to call attention to that, because in that 25th verse of the 11th of Matthew our Lord was speaking to his apostles. He had been sending them out to preach; and the evangelist records, "*At that time* Jesus answered and said"; that is to say, at the very time when he sent out these special servants of his who were in the judgment of scribes and Pharisees nothing better than poor babes: he thanked God because they were of a kind which he delights to use: he thanked God that he had not committed the gospel revelation to the wise and to the noble, but unto these child-like ones who had guileless minds, and capacity for believing and nothing more. These poor men could do little else but speak when they were spoken to, and say what they were told; and that is the best qualification for a minister that I know of—for him to speak only when God speaks to him, and then utter what God has said to him and nothing more. The Father chooses just such.

See how Paul states this fact in the opening chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." See what strange champions God has ordained for his battle—the very weakest among men, babes and sucklings in their own esteem. These who are weakness itself are to go forth and contend for the truth.

Such, my brethren, are those who proclaim the triumphs of Christ in the world. Our Lord would get little honour from our race if all children's voices were hushed and all child-like spirits with them. Scribes and Pharisees never cry "Hosannah!" they are so busy binding on their phylacteries, washing their hands, and devouring widows' houses. The first to cry "Hosannah!" are the children, and the next are those who are like them. Some say, "To shout and sing is children's work;" so it is, and it is ours because we are children, too. May God make us to grow in grace till we are as little children, and are therefore ready and eager to praise our great Father. Those who are reputed to be wise men do not praise too much; they go upon the non-committal principle, and prefer criticism to gratitude. They are always criticising the weather; if it is good for the turnips it is bad for the wheat, and if dry for hay-making, it is too dry for something else. The worldly-wise man never says, "Blessed be God for this delightful season; nothing can be better; we are highly favoured." No, he thinks he shows his wisdom by finding fault; God himself cannot escape from his sage remarks; but if a man is not wise enough to be for ever grumbling,

but is so foolish as to be happy, so foolish as to believe the truth, so foolish as to trust in the most trustworthy of all beings, namely, his God—he is also the sort of man that praises God, and from such hearts God gets his chief praises. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, not to ride upon an ass, or upon a colt, the foal of an ass, but to reign in glory; and when he cometh, the first to meet him and salute him will be those poor, babe-like ones, who did not boast of culture, but believed in God; who knew little, but yet knew their Lord, and longed for his appearing, sighing often, "Oh that he would come and end the strife! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" These are they who find him first, as the shepherds found him at Bethlehem, when the wise men rambled round by Jerusalem, and these are they who joy and rejoice over him, while scribes and Pharisees quarrel about him. The poor have the gospel preached to them, and the babes in spirit hear that gospel, and live.

Thus have I spoken to you concerning the warriors God has chosen. They are simple people, trustful people, unaffected people—made so by divine grace—converted into little children. They are ready to believe their God: they are not wise, or noble, or anything great in their own esteem, and yet out of their mouths God hath ordained strength, and by their witness he silences the disputers of this world, and all the wisdom of men.

IV. Now let us note, in the fourth place, that THE QUALIFICATION OF THESE WARRIORS LIES IN THEIR WEAK SIDE. If it lay on the strong side the text would have been written in another manner, and we should have read, "Out of the mouth of men of middle age, in the prime of life—out of the mouth of wise old men, who have grey hairs upon their head, indicative of their long experience—out of their mouths God has ordained strength"; but he takes men at their weakest and speaks of "babes," or children who are quite young. The word must not be confined to infants, for it includes young children who are able to run about the streets. The sucklings also are older children than they would represent with us, for eastern mothers often nurse their children till they are three years of age, so that some sucklings speak distinctly. The idea is that if you take man at his least, out of his mouth God ordains strength. He regards not man as grown up and strong, but man in his greatest weakness, and out of the mouth of weak man God ordains strength. What doth this teach? I take it that whatever is weakest about man is that in which the grace of God glorifies itself most.

Man is not only a soul and spirit, but he is in part material, and hence a poor creature, composed in part of the lower elements. He is not pure spirit, like an angel, but linked on to mother earth by a body of clay, cumbrous and hampering. He is a worm, and yet an angel; half-way between dust and deity; brother to the worm and to corruption, and yet immortal. Satan is no doubt filled with scorn of man when he looks at him and measures him with himself. "Is this the creature that is to be set over all the works of God's hands, —made of earth and water, phosphates and metals? I am nobler far than he. Can I not flash like lightning, while he must creep about the world to find himself a grave?" Yes, but herein is the glory of God's conflict and victory. The Lord intends to overcome the prince of evil

by a poor creature like man, who is but of yesterday, and is crushed before the moth. It is glorious to my mind that the Lord should deign to embody his power in weak creatures as we are, and in that way make Satan see that the right and the true in the feeblest being is unconquerable, and that in this form God carries the war into his own territory, and defeats him. Thus the Lord puts the adversary to a perpetual reproach. He pits a child against his giant foe and overcomes him. He hurls defiance to Satan out of a babe's mouth. Go thy way, O enemy; thou art dishonoured by the victory which feebleness gains over thee.

God is glorified in man's grievous infirmity. Man is, at his best, of all creatures one of the feeblest, and there is not so very much difference between full-grown men and babes. A few years ago we could not help ourselves at all, for we were abjectly weak in our infancy, but are we much more now? How did you feel yesterday afternoon in the storm, when the thunder rolled overhead, and the lightning flashed and flamed across the sky? Did you not feel that you were helpless as a babe? Put you to sea in a storm, and you will soon learn your babyhood, I warrant you, and feel that when "rocked in the cradle of the deep" you are as powerless as a child in its mother's arms. We need not be ashamed of this, but glory in it, because the power of God doth rest upon us. The great God seems to say to Satan, "It is by these poor feeble things that I will anger thee, O haughty prince of the air! By such beings as these I will overthrow thy usurped dominion. Though they suffer, though they are tempted, yet by my grace they shall triumph over thee."

We have the power to suffer, and herein lies a great part of our qualification to do the Lord's service before his enemies. It is our Redeemer's qualification. He could not save us until he suffered, he could not redeem us until he died; not his strength, but his weakness, saved us, for he was crucified in weakness, and by that crucifixion he redeemed our souls. Think of the men and women who have glorified God on beds of sickness, bearing their pains with patience, and blessing God all the while. Think of the many on the rack and at the stake, who have there extolled the Lord their God! Methinks of all the music God ever heard there is none that can equal in intense sweetness the cries of his dear, suffering, martyred people, when every limb has been tormented by the persecutor, and yet every particle of their body, and every power of their soul has willingly yielded up itself to maintain his cause and glorify his name. True music lies not in the sound, but in the spirit of the song, and hence, I say, none can match, much less excel, the songs of the martyr host. Blessed be God that we can suffer. We should be denied a privilege if we had not been able to endure the will of God as well as to do it. Surely of all diadems, that crown which is set with rubies, the crown which adorns the martyr's brow, is the most resplendent. Yes, it is man's weak side, his suffering and his dying side, by which God has shown the enemy that men can love their God even unto death, that virtue can triumph over all selfishness, that true hearts can make sacrifices, that mortal man can defy temptation, and can, through God's grace, follow after that which is good to the uttermost of loss and pain.

Now, dear brethren, dwell on this thought, and meditate on the fact

that our power to serve God lies on our weak side. He uses not our greatness, but our littleness. You know what the learned men say is the weak part of some of us,—they put it something like this:—"We regret the preacher's total inability to keep abreast of the times; his incapacity for modern thought, and his want of affection for the higher culture, which is so much the characteristic of this marvellously enlightened century." That is our weakness. Yes, *and our strength*, and therefore we glory in it. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." If all God's servants will come to this, they will secure far more success than by the pretentious style of so-called "culture," which is nothing but the science of growing more weeds than usual. That which is new in theology is not true; the gospel was of full stature at its very birth; no man can add to it or take from it. It cannot be improved, and it only needs to be told out in the power of the Holy Ghost and it will perform wonders even as of old. Our infirmity we will glory in, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and if the vessel had not been of earth we might never have received the treasure. "But," cries one, "surely we need wisdom to guide us?" I answer that "Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom," and we have but to learn of him. We hear much nowadays of "great thinkers," but we prefer to be great believers. Deep thinking is a very shallow affair after all when the thoughts are our own; we only get into real depths when we receive the thoughts of God. So far as I can see, these "thinkers" generally empty their places of worship when they preach, and the poor souls that most need comfort get none whatever. Rather than copy their example we may well prefer to sing with Paul, "When I am weak then am I strong." We will believe what God says, and take it as a matter of fact just as a child does. And oh! what a sweet thing a child's faith is! Many a time when a dear little girl has come to join the church, and looked at me with her expressive, believing eyes, which seemed to see Jesus, I have admired and envied her pure, unquestioning confidence. Knowing nothing about those horrible doubts which are now sown like thistles everywhere, such as these have the rest of faith without its struggles.

I have desired to be a little child again, and wished that I had never heard of the existence of a quibbler. Those fine books of the broad school which came from Germany years ago, but which we now produce at home, it is a pity to have seen the binding of them. Even doctors of divinity favour us with denials of plenary inspiration, and aid in that form of undermining work: they may have all their books so long as we can keep our Bibles, and God gives us firm faith in himself. Let us but know Jesus and lean our heads on his bosom, and the learned men may speculate as they please. Oh! when the church gets back to her simple faith in Jesus, she shall be qualified for victory; she shall vanquish the world when she has thrown away her wooden sword of carnal reason and has taken up the true Jerusalem blade of faith in God. Then out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God will do what he never will do out of the mouths of Scribes and Pharisees and wise men. Out of the mouths of weak people, who believe what God tells them,—the mouths of weak people who have no capacity except the capacity of faith—out of these [redacted] God perfect praise and glorify himself.

V. That leads me, in finishing, to plead for a loving reverence for childhood. If the Lord uses the weak side of man, and if he is engaged to win his ultimate victory over the devil by feeble man at his feeblest, then, God bless the children! It seems to me that in the Lord's battle there is always a babe in the fore-front. The armies of olden times placed a huge champion in their van, like Goliath of Gath; but it is not so in God's army; there a babe leads the way. Pharaoh oppresses Israel, and crushes the people down till their cry goes up because of their sore bondage. God is going to deliver them. How does the work begin? Here is the opening of the campaign: "And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to wash herself," and there she spied a little ark made of bulrushes, which she sent her maid to fetch, and there was a Hebrew child within it. "And behold! the babe wept." Thus was the champion of Israel introduced upon the scene; the goodly child whom his parents in faith had hidden was he by whom God would break Rahab in pieces. The still loftier story of the battle of the Lamb opens in like manner: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." "She brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." That was the signal for the heat of the conflict: that babe led the way. The holy child Jesus is at the head of all our marches. One may well honour infancy and childhood since this is the case.

Let our subject prevent our entertaining doubts about the possibility of children's conversions: that would be insanity, and almost blasphemy. Do you not know that except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The childlike spirit is no disqualification; in some respects it is a vantage ground. Christianity is the religion of children. Other religions, as a rule, aim at older folk, and pretend to mystery. Other religions are not worth understanding, but yet they affect depth and secresy; you must be initiated, and pass through years of study before you can hope to derive any advantage from them; but the religion of Jesus Christ was meant for the poor and for the lowly. All that which is necessary for the saving of the soul can be speedily learned and understood, the Holy Spirit being the teacher. As far as the practical, saving part of Christianity is concerned it is the religion of children. If a preacher can interest a child he can interest anybody. Is it not all a mistake when we say, "Oh! he is only fit to talk to children." If he is fit to do this, he is fit to talk to apostles.

Let us heartily believe, also, in children's praises. I am sure you must do so if you are like your Lord, for he delighted in them. He would not stop the boys when they shouted "Hosannah!" The scribes sneeringly asked, "Hearest thou what these say?" Yes, he did hear it, and he said, "Out of their mouths God has perfected praise." Let the children sing, and do not despise their hymns because they are more fitted for children than for you.

Let the children sing, and thank God they do sing. Never despise them. Do not say, "Oh, they are only a parcel of boys and girls." What if they are? May they not be a better parcel than some of you? If we were half as free from guile and unbelief as boys and girls, it

would be better for us: if we could get the simple trustfulness of childhood back again it would be a great gain to character.

Let us not undervalue their praises or their service. My text supports me in the strongest appeal which I can make; hear it yet again: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Let the children serve God, and let us put forms of service in their way. That is a sweet verse: "And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." The child Samuel and the Lord Jehovah. What a singular combination! God who filleth all things, and Hannah's little boy! God give us to see our boys and girls ministering before the Lord while they are yet in their frocks and pinafores. The linen ephod is as suitable for a child as for an ancient priest. No robe is more glorious than the garment of service, and whether it be worn by old or young, it is a right royal dress.

Last of all, let us expect victory to come to the church through little children. It may happen that God will bring the world to Christ's feet by the children. It is written, "A little child shall lead them." Who knows how many are led to Jesus by children? This city of ours is better evangelized by our Sunday-schools than by all the rest of us put together. I don't mean to flatter Sunday-school teachers, but I must speak well of the children. When they go home they find that father is hardly dressed, he has not been to a place of worship, but he has been reading the Sunday paper; he does not want any of your singing and preaching. Little Mary and Tommy come back, and they don't ask him anything about it, but they begin to sing, and when they have their dinner they talk about what teacher said, and perhaps they say something about the sermon, and so father gets more singing and preaching than he bargained for. When they go to bed they clasp their little hands, and pray for their father, and he is obliged to hear them: thus he gets praying as well as singing. The children are missionaries, and they enter where others cannot. The city missionary may be shut out, but father cannot shut out Tommy or Mary, and they must be let to sing or they will cry, and that is worse: so that their witness cannot be silenced. What little children are doing for London and for our great cities it is impossible for us to calculate. The darlings die, and in this they often do more than by their lives. How many hard hearts have been broken, and stubborn wills subdued, by the deathbeds of infants! How many a mother has had her first desires for heaven kindled by the flight of her little cherub up to the bosom of Christ! They do God's work here below in a wonderful manner. It is true, and will be truer every day, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord has ordained strength, because of his enemies, that he might still the enemy and the avenger. God's blessing be with all of you who work among the children. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm viii.; Matthew xxi. 1—16; 1 Corinthians i. 18—31.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—8, 681, 477.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MEN BEWITCHED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the h, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among .?"—Galatians iii. 1.

TH very great enthusiasm the Galatians received the gospel when ıl preached it to them. They seem to have been a very warm-hearted ; fickle people, and Paul found to his great grief that, while he was ay from them, certain false teachers came in and turned them aside m the gospel which he had delivered to them. He spake out very inly about the matter. In this verse he uses very strong terms, while says to them—"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye ıuld not obey the truth?" I do not know that any such witchery ı fallen upon any of you, but I do know that, being men, we are all ›ject to like dangers, and I know also that there is a witchery in the y air at this time, so that many are to be found throughout the ırches of this land to whom these words might be justly spoken.

We can only hope to escape this evil which Paul so severely condemns the use of right cautionary means. It is only, in fact, as the Holy ost shall keep us that we shall be preserved from the fascinations of or, and kept true to the grand old gospel of the blessed God. At this ıe I shall very briefly speak, in the first place, upon *the subtle danger* ich is hinted at here; "Who hath bewitched you?" Secondly, at more gth I shall speak upon *the blessed preservative:* there is no way of ng kept from this witchery like having Christ Jesus set forth among evidently crucified. And, thirdly, a few words, in closing, upon *supreme folly* of any who, having tried this divine preservative, vertheless do become bewitched by error.

I. First, then, let us think of THE SUBTLE DANGER which is ever ›und us.

It was hard work to preach the gospel at first among the heathen. ın had to lay down their lives to do it. They had to propound new ngs which the heathen mind did not readily receive. But, by the wer of the Spirit of God, converts were made, and churches were med. And now came another difficulty. Even those that were con-ted, or appeared to be so, became suddenly, as it were, bewitched

with error of one kind or another, just as in families children are suddenly taken ill with certain complaints which seem incidental to childhood. If parents had never heard of such things before, they would be astonished. They would suppose that they must lose their children when such unaccountable diseases suddenly appeared in them, and yet they survive. In the family of Christ certain epidemics break out at times. We cannot tell why they should come just then; and at first, perhaps, we are puzzled and perplexed to think that such diseases should come at all; but they do come; and hence it is well to be on our guard against them. Paul calls it being bewitched, because these people fell into strange error, error which had no argument to back it, error surprising and startling. He seems to say, "I cannot make it out. I cannot understand how you should be thus misled." In Paul's day the error was generally that of Judaism. They wanted to go back to circumcision, and to the old sacrifices of the law. Paul was indignant enough about this. "I testify," said he, "to everyone of you, that if he be circumcized he is a debtor to keep the whole law, and he has fallen from grace. If you go back to the old beggarly elements of Judaism, you are leaving Christ, and rejecting Christ, and imperilling your souls." He declares that he could not understand how they should wish to do it. He calls it witchery, for in his day it was believed that men could cast an evil eye upon one another, and thus work evil upon their fellow men. It seemed to Paul to be something like that—as if the devil himself were in it, and came and turned men away from Christ Jesus, to go back to trusting in the law and its obsolete ceremonies.

It was not long before Paul found another kind of error in the church. There came in among the humbler believers certain men of education, who thought themselves highly intelligent—men who knew something about Socrates and Plato; and they said, "These doctrines are too plain. The poor people understand them, and they come into the church; but no doubt they have a deeper meaning, intended only for the initiated." So they began to spiritualize everything, and, in the process, they spirited away the very gospel itself. Paul could not endure it. He said that though he or an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel than that which he had preached it would be a cursed deed. Whether it were Judaism, or Gnosticism, he smote it heavily, and said to those who fell into it, "Who hath bewitched you?"

You who read church history know that in after ages the church fell into Arianism. There were great disputes about the deity of Christ, and the air for a long time was full of that deadly plague. When that battle was over, and such men as Athanasius had settled the question of our Redeemer's Godhead, then came up all the superstitions of Rome—that awful midnight, black with murky clouds, which covered the church for ages. Indeed, if we look back on history, it seems like a witchcraft, that men who had the gospel preached among them in all its glorious simplicity, should after all submit their minds to such debasing falsehoods as those of old Rome, and prostrate themselves before images of of wood and stone after a heathenish manner, even as their pagan forefathers had done.

At this present time it is a marvel to some of us how the churches have been bewitched again. When I was a boy I recollect hearing Mr. Jay

, "Puseyism is a lie!" I remember the words coming just like
t from his reverend lips, and everybody, or nearly everybody, thought
h him. It was a wonderful event if a high church or ritualistic
ɔe was set up. Everybody was astonished at it; and if you said,
'his is the church of England, and this is according to her prayer-
ɔk," everybody said you were uncharitable, and that it was not so,
ey pitied our fears, and said that a dozen men were going towards
me, and that was all. Look ye now, sirs: these things are openly
ıe. Our parish churches are commonly turned into mass houses, and
Church of England is slightly to be distinguished in many parishes
m the church of Rome, and yet nobody is astonished; and, if we make
ɛmark about it, we are set down as bigoted. Who hath bewitched
ɜ Protestant land? With Smithfield scarcely yet swept of the ashes
her martyrs, they set up the crucifix again! What would Oliver
ɔmwell say if he and his Ironsides could come back again to see what
y are making of this land? I wot some strong things he would say;
l, as I cannot speak such vigorous words as he would have uttered,
ɜave the subject with words borrowed from Paul, which well suit the
ɜ, "O foolish Englishmen, who hath bewitched you, that ye should
ɜ turn aside?"

Nor is this all. You see this witchery in another way among our
ɜenting churches. At a time not yet forgotten Unitarianism and
ɪnianism gradually crept into Nonconforming congregations, and the
pits lost their testimony for Christ; the meeting-houses were de-
ɜed, and true religion seemed dying out of the land. Then came
ıitefield and Wesley, and all their troop of Methodists, and the
ɜsed flame that was almost quenched burned up again, and we, of this
ıeration, have said one to another, "That experiment will never be
eated: the Nonconformist churches will never go in that direction
ın: they know better. They see the ill-effect of this modern
ching, and they will stick to the grand old gospel now." So I
amed; but I dream in that way no longer, for scarcely do I look
rwhere but I find the gospel of Christ diluted, the milk of the word
lterated, and the grand gospel, as Luther and Calvin would have
ndered it out, seldom enough to be heard. O foolish Noncon-
mists, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth,
; should seek after this novelty and the other—this refinement and
other, and let your God and Saviour go? As for us, if we stand
ne, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord
ıs Christ.

This is the peril.

II. Our second head is THE ONLY PRESERVATIVE. The apostle says
t the Galatians had had Christ set forth before their eyes crucified
ong them.

Well then, if you want to be kept right and sound in the faith, the
t thing is to get the right subject fixed in the centre of your hearts—
ıs Christ crucified. Paul says that he preached *that*. He set Jesus
ɜh. Whatever else he might not have made clear, he did set forth
person and work of Jesus Christ. Beloved, settle this in your
l, that your sole hope and the main subject of your meditation shall
ays be Jesus Christ. Whatever I do not know, O my Lord, help me

to know thee. Whatever I do not believe, enable me to believe thee, and to trust thee, and to take thy every word as the very truth of God. Beloved, away with the religion that has little of Christ in it. Christ must be Alpha and Omega, first and last. The religion that is made up of our doings and our feelings and our willings is a falsehood. Our religion must have Christ for the foundation, Christ as the cornerstone, Christ as the topstone; and if we are not based and bottomed, grounded and settled upon him, our religion is vain. Paul wonders that any to whom Christ has been the chief thing should ever have been bewitched; and I trow that if Christ be really such to your souls, you will not turn aside through error, but Christ crucified will hold you fast.

But Paul says not only that he had preached Christ to them, but that he had set him forth, by which I understand that he had taken pains to make all about Christ clear to them. He had preached his person as man and God. He had preached his work as the atoning sacrifice. He had preached him as risen and pleading before the throne of God. He had preached him as our substitute. He had made this the main doctrine—that, if we are saved, we are saved by the righteousness of Christ, and our sin is put away because Christ bore it in our stead and suffered the penalty due for it, that so the justice of God might be satisfied, and we might be saved. That is what he means by Christ crucified. He had gone into details on this point and set forth the glorious doctrines which cluster about the cross. Brethren, if you want to be kept from the modern witcheries, think much of Christ, and go into detail about him. Be familiar with his divine person. Be well acquainted with his relationships, and his offices: know what he is in the covenant of grace, what he is to the Father, what he is to you. Oh seek to know him! He yet surpasseth knowledge; but be students of Christ. Do not have a mere superficial knowledge of him, but seek to know Christ, and to be found in him. This will keep you free from error.

When the apostle says that he set Christ forth, he means, next, that he had done it with great plainness. The Greek word has to do with a programme or a proclamation; it is as good as to say, "I have set Christ before you as plainly as if I had printed a great bill and stuck it up before your eyes. I have put the letters down in capitals. As a king, when he makes a proclamation, puts it on the walls, and calls attention to it, so," says Paul, "I have set forth Christ before you. I have not talked of him in a mystical way, so that you did not know what I meant, but I have set him forth. I have said of him that he suffered *in our* stead, and was made a curse for us, as it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'"

Paul set forth Jesus plainly. Now, you know the way in which Jesus Christ is preached by some. It was well described by old Dr. Duncan when he said, "They preach that the death of Christ in some way or other had some sort of connection, in some way or other, with the salvation of men." Yes, that is it—misty, cloudy, foggy—a bottle of smoke. We do not preach Christ in that way, but we just say this, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and because he was oppressed and he was afflicted in the room and place and stead of the guilty, therefore does God most freely remit the sin of believers and bid

m go their way. Substitution—may we never stammer over that—
rist in the sinner's stead.
Beloved, if you will get a hold of that truth, and get it well worked
o your soul, you will be more than a match for the ritualism
rationalism of the age. Give up that doctrine? The man who has
e drunk it in and knows its sweetness cannot give it up; for he gets
eel that, having once believed it, it acts in him as a detector by which
discovers what is false doctrine, and it gives to him a taste which
kes false doctrine loathsome to him, so that he cries, "Away with
If anything contrary to this comes before him, he does not timidly
, "Everybody has a right to his opinion"; but he says, "Yes, they
y have a right to their opinion, and so have I to mine; and my
nion is that any opinion which takes away from the glory of
rist's substitutionary sacrifice is a detestable opinion." Get the real
nement of Christ thoroughly into your soul, and you will not be
ritched.
Nor is this all. Paul says that Christ was set forth crucified visibly
ong them. Did you ever see Christ in this way? I do not ask
ether you ever saw a vision. Who wishes for that? I do not ask
ether your imagination was so worked upon that you thought you
the Saviour. There would be no particular use in that, for thousands
actually see him on the cross, and they thrust out the tongue at him
perished in their sins. But let me tell you that it is one of the most
ngthening things to our piety to get to feel by faith as though we did
old the Saviour. We do not expect to *see* him until he comes; yet
en we have been alone in our chamber we have as much realized his
sence without the use of our eyes as if we had literally seen him.
has been certainly sensibly crucified before us, for this is the point.
says that he had set forth Christ with such vividness—he had word
nted so thoroughly well, he had spoken so plainly and so simply,
t they seemed to say, "We see it: Christ in our stead, Christ bleeding
our sin." They seemed to see him as if he were before them in their
lst. My dear friends, do not say, "Christ died on Calvary. That is
usands of miles off." I know that he did, but what matters it where
died as to locality? He loved you, and gave himself for you. Let
a be to you as though he were crucified at Newington Butts, and as
ugh his cross were in the middle of this tabernacle. "Oh, but he
d nineteen hundred years ago." I know that he did, but the efficacy
his death is a thing of to-day. "He died unto sin once": and that
e pours the splendour of its efficacy all down the ages, and the thing
you to do is to feel as if you saw him dying *now*, on the tree *now*—
standing immediately at the foot of the cross, and looking up, and
ing him looking down from off that cross and saying, "I did all this for
e." Cannot you ask the Lord to make it as vivid as that to you?
ant, while I am looking upon this great throng, to forget you all,
to see Jesus standing here with the nail prints. Oh, if I could see
a how humbly I would throw myself at his feet! With what love
ald I embrace him! With what reverence would I adore him! But,
Master, I am so sure of the fact that thou didst die in my stead, and
t my sins were laid on thee, that even now I see thee discharging
my debts, and bearing all my curse. Though thou art gone to the

glory, yet I vividly realize that thou wast here. This has become a fact to me.

Whenever you get into company where they are talking about the doctrines of grace, and sneering about them, and whenever you get into another class of company, where they say, "Away with your simple worship of God! You must have priests, and incense, and altars, and all": do not argue with them. Get alone, and ask to see Jesus Christ over again. See if there is anything of popish finery about him. See if there is anything of this philosophy, falsely so called, about him. You will determine as soon as you have seen him that you will call all things else vanity and lies, and bind his gospel to your heart. The cross is the school of orthodoxy. Endeavour to keep there. While I have been alone on the Continent I have, in my quiet moments, had realizations of my Master's presence, and then I have wished that I could borrow the wings of a dove, so that I might there and then stand up and talk to you. I have been very sick and full of pain, and depressed in spirit, and I have judged myself to be of all men most unworthy, and I judged truly. I stand to that judgment still. I felt myself only worthy to be shaken like dust from off the feet of my Lord, and cast into the bottomless pit for ever. Then it was that my Substitute was my hope, and in my lonely chamber at Mentone I clung to his dear skirts; I looked into his wounds; I trusted myself with him again, and I know that I am a saved man. I tell you there is no salvation in any other, but only in Jesus. You will not be led away to any other doctrine if you will return continually to this truth. Some men want a sound pummelling with affliction to get them to love Christ; and some old professors need a touch of poverty sometimes, or a little affliction, or a rack of rheumatism, and that would bring them to their bearings, and they would begin to cry out after realities, and get rid of whims and fancies. When it comes to close dealings between God and your soul, and death stares you in the face, nothing will do but a crucified Redeemer, and no confidence will do but a sinner's childlike reliance upon the finished work of him who suffered in our stead. I speak strongly, but I feel a thousand times more strongly than I can speak.

III. The last point is THE SUPREME FOLLY of those who would leave Jesus for anything else. Suppose that any man should once have trusted in Jesus Christ simply, and have realized the death of Christ, and have come into real contact with the dying, bleeding Master; and suppose that, after that, he should begin to put his confidence in priests and sacraments; or suppose that he should, after that, put on his lavender kid gloves and become a philosopher,—what would he be? Now, do not tell anybody, I pray you. Keep it to yourselves. The apostle Paul did not affect the manners of a gentleman, but he spoke very plainly indeed. Do not tell your learned neighbours that I said it, because I did not say it: it is Paul that said it: he says that a man who should do that would be—A FOOL. "Oh, foolish Galatians!" What are you at, Paul? They have been decorating their service; surely you cannot object to that. Don't you know, Paul, that the old Jewish priest used to wear a splendid breastplate wrought with jewels, and he had an ephod adorned with bells and pomegranates? Surely in the worship of God we ought to do things decorously and properly! And on this plea

these Galatians have decked themselves out exceedingly. "They are foolish Galatians!" he says. Very rude of him, mark you; very rude of him! I shall not attempt to excuse him, for I fully endorse his verdict.

But here is a gentleman who has been reading Plato, and after reading Plato he has been reading the words of Jesus Christ, and he says that they do not mean what the common people think they mean—that there is a very mysterious philosophical sense hidden within them. For instance, when Jesus Christ says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," it does not mean at all what the words say. It means that they shall ultimately be restored. Now, Paul, this gentleman is a philosopher; what do you say of him? He says, "He is foolish!" That is all he says, and all that he needs to say, for learned folly is folly at its height. "Oh, foolish Galatians! Who hath bewitched you?"

Why do we think these people foolish? Because *we* should be foolish ourselves if we were to do the same. A good many years ago, when I was about fifteen or sixteen years of age, I wanted a Saviour, and I heard the gospel preached by a poor man, who said in the name of Jesus—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It was very plain English, and I understood it, and obeyed it and found rest. I owe all my happiness since then to the same plain doctrine. Now, suppose that I were to say, "I have read a great many books, and there are a great many people willing to hear me. I really could not preach such a commonplace gospel as I did at the first. I must put it in a sophisticated way, so that none but the *élite* can understand me." I should be—what should I be? I should be a fool, writ large. I should be worse than that, I should be a traitor to my God; for if I was saved by a simple gospel, then I am bound to preach that same simple gospel till I die, so that others too may be saved by it. When I cease to preach salvation by faith in Jesus put me into a lunatic asylum, for you may be sure that my mind is gone.

There are hundreds of you who feel perfectly happy in Christ. You believe that all your sins are washed away, that you are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and accepted in the Beloved. Now, suppose that you give that up and say, "Instead of believing in Christ's dying once and making an atonement, I am going to believe in the perpetual sacrifice offered by a human being in the mass": you will be very foolish. Suppose that instead of trusting in Jesus Christ for perfect pardon and justification, so that you know that there is no condemnation to you because you are in Christ Jesus, you go back to works, and say, "I am going to work out my own salvation by my own good works": you will be foolish to the last degree, and you will soon discover the fact by the misery that will come over your spirit.

Look again. When you have lived nearest to Christ, and trusted most in him, have you not felt most desire after holiness? Now, tell me, if you have tried the modern views, what state of mind have you been in with regard to your daily walk? I will tell you. You could, with those modern views, frequent the theatre and the music hall, and feel quite easy; and you could do a sharp trick in business and feel comfortable; but you know that when you have seen Christ you cannot do anything of the kind. You are sanctified by his presence. You feel a strong desire after perfect purity. You feel a horror and a dread of sin.

You walk tenderly and cautiously, and you are bowed down by distress of mind at the thought of your imperfections. Judge then which must be the right doctrine. That which makes you most holy must certainly be true; and if you turn away from your Lord, whose very presence breathes sanctification, and communion with whom is sure to bring holiness, you will be a fool: and we shall have to say, "Oh, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?"

During the late meetings that we have had here, my dear brethren Fullerton and Smith have been preaching the gospel, the straightout gospel of Jesus Christ, and at one meeting, held afterwards, there were scores of persons who rose up to tell of what that ministry had done for their souls by God the Holy Spirit. There were thieves reclaimed, drunkards reclaimed, harlots reclaimed, great sinners reclaimed. Well, now, suppose that, after all, some of you ladies and gentlemen should say, "We see what the gospel can do, but we are going to try something else," you will be fools. I am always ready to try a new machine: we will try the electric light one of these days instead of gas when we are sure of it; but suppose that it should all go out and leave us in the dark! I will wait till the invention has been tested. So it may happen with the new religious lights that men bring up, which are like dim rushlights compared with the blazing sun of gospel truth; we are not going to try anything new to the risk of our souls. We are going to keep to the old, old gospel until it is worn out. When it gets worn out, and will not save any more, and will not comfort any more, and will not draw us near to God any more, then will be the time for us to think of something fresh. But as that has not come to pass, I beg to say that I will drive another nail into my old colours and fasten them anew to the old mast. What I have preached among you these six-and-twenty years I will preach again; for I am determined to know nothing among men but Christ and him crucified; and may neither the preacher become a fool, nor any of his hearers become fools, by being bewitched, so that they forsake the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh that you all knew its power, and were all saved by it! God grant that you may be, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians ii. 21; and chapter iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—291, 282, 278.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAMUEL AND THE YOUNG MAN SAUL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."—1 Samuel ix. 27.

THIS was Samuel's third interview with this goodly young man. He had spoken with him and entertained him in his parlour, giving him the place of honour; he had afterwards spent the evening with him in quiet on the house-top, and now they were about to part he took a fresh opportunity of speaking to him. This time he spoke to him with great closeness of personal application, sending the servant out of the way that he might say things to him which nobody else might hear. He tried to speak to the young man's inmost soul. The prophet felt a deep solemnity, his whole heart saying every word that fell from his lip. He knew that this young man was about to be made a king, to take upon him very heavy responsibilities, and he might either be a great curse to Israel or a great blessing, and therefore the man of God, with all the gravity of his years, and all the earnestness of his loving spirit, said, "Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God." I think I hear his earnest tones, and accents sweetened by a great love, for Samuel loved Saul, and it was his affection which made him speak so earnestly and pointedly. I may have among my hearers at this moment some to whom I have spoken many times, but I should like once more to have a special, personal interview with them. Come, young man, step aside and let me speak with you. Try and think that no one is here except the preacher and yourself, and that he means *you* when he speaks. I long this time to do my Master's work thoroughly with you in the power of the Spirit of God. This time the preacher would hold you fast, as if he said to each one, "I will not let thee go unless thou give thy heart to Christ, and become his servant from this very hour."

There are two things in the text about which I wish to speak. Here is the first: *the attention which he requested;* and the second, on which we shall dwell at greater length, concerns *the subject upon which he spoke.*

I. First, let us think upon THE ATTENTION WHICH HE REQUESTED. *He said to the servant, "Pass on before us,"* and he passed on. Will

you, also, kindly try to dismiss from your minds any other thoughts besides those which we will try to bring before you. Bid the servant pass on; forget for a while your business, forget your family, forget your joys, forget your sorrows. You have had enough of these, I dare say, all the week. Perhaps you have been haunted by them in your sleep: your dreams have been rendered unhappy by the rehearsal of your trials. By an effort of your mind, in which God will help you, try to make these servants pass on. I wish I could so speak that men would say of my preaching what they said of Whitefield's. One man said, "Whenever I went to church before, I calculated how many looms the church would hold"—for he was a weaver—"but when I heard Whitefield I never thought of a loom." Another said, "While I have been in church I have often built a ship from stem to stern; but when I heard Mr. Whitefield I could not lay a plank; he took my mind right away from such things, and occupied me with higher thoughts." I pray you, help me in my endeavour to engross your attention. Let the ships go, and the loom go, and the kitchen go, and the business go: send on the servant, and be alone now with yourself and your God.

The next point in the attention requested was the desire that he would "*stand still a while.*" They had been walking quietly down the hill till they came to the last house in the town, and when they had come fairly into the fields he said, "Stand thou still a while": as much as to say—I have somewhat important to say, and you will catch it better if you are quiet and motionless as to your body, but especially if your mind can be still. Forget the asses that you sought after, and your father's house, and all home concerns, and calmly listen to me. It is a very desirable thing when we are listening to the gospel to let it have its full effect upon us, to give our minds up to it, and say,—"Let it come like the dew, and soak into my mind as the dew into Gideon's fleece. Let it come like a shower, and let it enter into my very nature as the rain into the clods which are softened by the gentle influence of the showers." I pray you bask in the gospel as men do in the sunlight when they would be warm. Let the gospel have its own legitimate effect upon you. Lay bare your bosom to it. Ask that your soul may have no stone of carelessness laid upon it, as though it were a dead thing in a sepulchre, but that it may come forth in resurrection life through the quickening word of the divine Spirit.

Is not this what the word of God deserves? Should it not have our living, loving attention? When God speaks let all be silent. Hush, ye senators, if God speaks. Sit still, ye princes, if the King of kings lifts up his voice. Quiet, even ye choirs celestial, if Jehovah speaks. An obedient homage should be paid to the voice of God by the deep awe and reverence of the spirit. Do you ever get alone and sit still, and say, as Samuel did, in the dead of night, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? If you never do that, the little child Samuel may well rebuke you. He was willing that God should speak to him. But, oh! we are so busy! so busy! so sadly busy! I have heard that the great clock at St. Paul's can scarcely be heard in Cheapside, by reason of the traffic that is going by; and so the most solemn voices are drowned amidst the din and uproar of our business, and we do not often hear God's voice, unless we are accustomed to give ourselves a little quiet

and holy stillness, and sit in our chamber alone, and say, "Now, Lord, commune with me. I wish to hear thy voice. I open my Bible. I am about to read a few verses. Oh, speak with me." I do not believe there would be very many persons left unconverted if it were their habit and practice day by day to open the word of God with the desire that God should speak to them. Come then, dear friend, send on your servant, forget your business, and stand still, that I may show you the Word of God.

As the Word of God deserves such quiet attention, *it certainly is only by such attention that it is likely to bless us.* Faith cometh by hearing, but not by such hearing as some men give, for the Word goes in at one ear and out at the other. They hear the gospel as though it were an idle tale, or a merry song, to which they listen at a street corner, and they go their way. Nay, but if thou wouldst get the blessing, thou must hear as for eternity, with all thine ears, and with thy whole heart, praying while thou dost hear, "Lord, bless this to me! Lord, bless this to me!" I remember a child who used to be noted for great attention during sermon, and his mother, noticing his deep earnestness, asked him why. He said, "Because, mother, I heard the preacher once say that if there was a piece of the discourse that was likely to be of good to our souls, Satan would try to make us lose it; and as I do not know which part God will bless me by, I try to hear it all, and to remember it all." Oh, when people come to listen to the preacher with such a spirit as that, it is sweet work to preach. You can easily feed hungry horses, and you can easily feed souls that hunger and thirst after righteousness: "They shall be filled." The Lord help us to give earnest heed to his own saving Word. "Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."

But *many things arise to prevent this attention.* You cannot get some folks to be still, they are so frivolous; you cannot make them think. Some men dread the process of thinking, almost as much as they would a touch of the "cat" on their backs. They cannot bear to consider and meditate. God has distinguished them above brutes by giving them the faculty of thought, but this high privilege they try to ignore. Any silly tale, or idle song, or light amusement, or pastime, will entice them, but they have no soul for serious things. They go through life, not as the bee, which sucks honey from every flower, but as the butterfly, which regards the garden as only a place over which it may flit, and where it may occasionally alight, but gather nothing, and so begins and ends its gaudy day, and has nothing in store. Let us not be the fluttering insects of an idle day. God grant we may not follow the fashion of this foolish world. May frivolity and levity be taken away from us, and may we in sober earnestness attend to things eternal. Others, on the other hand, are so exceedingly careful about the things of this world, that you cannot get them to think of the Word of God. What is heaven to them? They know a plan for making a large profit. You shall talk to them of Christ and all his beauties, but they will not afford you a thought: jingle a half-sovereign near them, and you shall excite all their desires. Inform them how they could be rich and famous, they will pay you for the prescription; but tell them about Christ, and you must beg and pray them to read half a page, and as to listening to your sermon,—the thing is dry, they

turn away from it. O you money-grubbers, have you souls at all, or are you nothing else but bodies? Are you mere leather purses for holding money? Do you expect to live in the future, to live in eternity, or do you think that you shall die, like the dog that follows at your heel? O my hearer, if you be not immortal, I can well excuse you that you think not of immortality; but if indeed you be a man made in the image of God, and destined to live for ever, it is but the commonest common sense that you should begin to prepare for those eternal abodes in which you are to dwell world without end. Do stand still a while, and let nothing come in to break the silence of your spirit, while you listen to the voice of God. I would earnestly persuade every one here who is not saved to get an hour alone somehow. Make up your mind to do so. Shut yourself up, and give an hour to solemn, earnest thought and consideration of your condition before God. I am persuaded that scarcely one would do that solemnly and earnestly but what it would end well, and we should have by-and-by to bless God for the happy result of that hour.

II. We leave the point, of the attention to be given, to consider THE SUBJECT UPON WHICH SAMUEL DISCOURSED with Saul, or rather the subject about which I would discourse at this time, if I am so happy as to have secured your ear. He says, "Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God." The subject is *the Word of God.* That God should give us a Word at all is very gracious. It is wonderful that he should condescend to speak to us, because we cannot understand much: we are like little children at the very best. For our heavenly Father to bring down the great meanings of his vast mind into human language is something very wonderful. When he spoke on Sinai with the accompaniment of tempest and lightning, it was a gracious thing for God to speak to man anyhow; but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son Jesus Christ, who is the Word: Jesus has come down into this world on purpose to interpret God to man. A man's mind goes to another man's mind by a word: the word tells what was in the speaker's thought. So Christ comes from God to us. God says to us, "You wish me to speak: that is my speech, MY SON; read my love to you in the fact that I gave my Son; read my justice, for I made *him* bleed; read my mercy, for in him I pass by transgression, iniquity and sin." Does God speak in such golden language, does he speak by his own Son, the eternal Word, and need I ask that he should have a hearing? Shall it have come to this, that God shall give up the darling of his bosom to a cruel death and yet we will turn aside and will not regard it? The Lord grant us deliverance from such madness and wickedness, and help us to feel, if salvation be worthy of the death of the Son of God, it must be worthy of our attending to it. If Jesus thought it worth his while to bleed upon the cross for man's salvation, it is worth my while to put everything aside till I am saved; it is worth my while to get me to my chamber, and shut to the door, and feel as if I never would rise from my knees till I had found peace with God through Jesus Christ. God is engaged in man's salvation, even the Father; Jesus was engaged in it, even the blessed Son; and the Holy Spirit is engaged in it, even the [redacted]vine Convincer of sin. Surely that which occupies the infinite mind

of the three blessed persons of the divine unity, must surely call to every wise man to lend his ear, and give it all his thoughts that he may receive, obtain, possess, enjoy, and delight himself in the precious things which God gives us freely in Christ Jesus. Then, dear hearer, do be thoughtful, and "Stand still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."

In the particular word of God which Samuel spoke to Saul there was some likeness to the message which I am bound to deliver to you. For, first, Samuel spoke to Saul *about a kingdom*, of which this young man should be the king. He never dreamed of that before. He had thought of his father's asses, but a throne and a crown had never entered his mind. Dost know, O strange young man, thou who hast stolen in to this service, that there is such a thing as the kingdom of God? Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Dost know, young man, that thou mayest be a king? Yea, if thou givest good heed to the gospel, thou shalt be a king, and sing with us unto the Lord Jesus, for he hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with him. Art thou occupied entirely with thy business, with seeking after a degree at the University, with striving to pass an examination or gain a situation? I will not call thee away from such pursuits, yet is there something higher than these. Thou mayest not be contented with such things as these, for God calls thee, he calls thee to a higher destiny, to something noble, so noble that those who share in it rank higher than the kings of the earth. Little did Saul dream that on this day the kingdom should be given him, and little dost thou dream of it perhaps as yet; but I pray thee let me show thee the word of God, for thou mayest yet find a kingdom there, a kingdom for thee, a crown of life for thee which fadeth not away, and a seat at the right hand of God with Christ in the day of his appearing.

Samuel not only spoke about the kingdom, but he showed him the word of God by *an anointing*. He took out a flask, which contained a little oil, and he poured it on his head. "O my hearer, stand thou still a while," and I will tell thee of an anointing. If thou dost regard this present voice of God, and dost heartily incline thine ear, and come unto Christ that thou mayest live, thou shalt by so doing receive an anointing from the Holy One by which thou shalt know all things that concern thy soul and thy God. Thou sayest, "I know little about religion." Thou shalt be taught of God, for this is the promise: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Thou sayest, "I am not capable of high and noble things." Thou shalt be made capable, for in the day when God anoints thee thou shalt receive strength,—"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Thou shalt receive enlightenment and illumination by the divine unction of the Holy Ghost. Hast thou ever thought of this? There is not only water to wash thee, but oil to anoint thee. Christ can take away thy sin at this moment, and he can also give thee grace so that thou shalt leave off the habits which hitherto have bound thee down, and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Is not such a gracious visitation worth standing still to receive it?

Samuel spake to Saul about another matter, namely, about *a change that he should undergo*. For as he talked with him he said, "Thou shalt meet a company of prophets, and thou shalt prophesy, and become another man." Little can you tell, my dear friend, what God will do with you. If thou be willing and obedient thou shalt eat the good of the land; if the Spirit of God shall lead thee in penitence to confess thy sin, and in humble, childlike faith to lay hold on Christ, thou shalt become, in a higher sense than Saul ever was, "another man." Thou shalt be born again; thou shalt be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Listen to these words of the blessed covenant, for I would hold thee and show thee the word of God. "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." "I could never be a Christian," says one. No, not as you are, but you shall be made a new man, and the new man is made in the image of Christ, and is a Christian. Hast thou never heard of this? this being changed? this being totally changed? Hast thou never heard that God can create thee for the second time? can destroy in thee the power of sin, and bring thee under another dominion, and make thee as eager after right as thou hast been after wrong, and make thee as happy in the service of Christ as ever thou wast in the service of the devil, ay, and ten thousand times more so?

And oh, I should not wonder, though you think it cannot be, he will open your mouth to talk to others about Christ. Though, young man, you little dream of such a thing at this moment, it may be the Lord has sent me to call you to himself, that you may surrender yourself to Jesus, and then, in some future day, you shall

> "Stand and tell to sinners round
> What a dear Saviour you have found,"

and be as enthusiastic in the service of the Lord Jesus as ever you have been in the frivolities of the world. Does something in your heart say, "I wish that it would so happen to me"? Is there a secret something in your heart echoing to that which I am saying? Oh Lord, grant that it may be so.

This is what we want you to think about, then, the kingdom, the anointing, and the change that God can work in you. If you will come and think well of the Word of God, you will see in it that which will meet all *the past* of your life, whatever it has been. There may be blots upon it, but in the Word of God you will find that which will wash them all away. You may have wept over your life, and yet you cannot wash away its stains; but the Word of God will tell you how you shall be made whiter than snow, and made to start again in life, delivered from every crimson stain. As to *the present*, does it puzzle thee? Ah, well it may, for life is a tangled skein to those who know not God. But thou shalt find the clue of it, thou shalt thread the labyrinth, thou shalt see how even thy afflictions work for thy good, how thy sickness means thy health, how thy being out of work and in poverty is to make thee rich, how even thy lying at death's door is sent to give thee life, and thou shalt so understand the present as to feel that with all its apparent evil it is working for thy good. And as to

uture, wouldst thou read aright thy destiny? My Lord can tell thee future by making thee know that, "Surely goodness and mercy shall w thee all the days of thy life, and thou shalt dwell in the house of Lord for ever." Oh that men would not neglect the Word of God, er in the hearing of it preached, or in the private reading of it in their es. For believe me, there is something in the Bible which just suits

Poor fallen woman, have you strolled in here to-night? There is ething for you in the Holy Scriptures. Poor despairing man, far in desperation, there is something in the Book on purpose for you. ied to think that a certain text in the Bible was written with a ial view to my case. It seemed to me that it might have penned after I had lived, so accurately did it describe me. n so, dear friend, there is something in the Bible *for you*. as when you have lost a key, and you cannot open a drawer, send for a locksmith, he turns over no end of skeleton keys, till ast he has got the right one, and he moves the bolt for you; so with the Scriptures: there is a key for every lock, there is a clue for y difficulty, a help for every trouble, and a comfort for every grief. do thou stand still a while, and let us show thee the Word of God. e Christian brother may find the key for thee, or thou mayest ible on it whilst searching the Word for thyself, or the Holy Spirit bring it to thee. There is a word to suit thy case, therefore give Book a fair opportunity, and stand still and hear the Word of God. et me say to thee, thou knowest not the Word, but the Word knows . Thou knowest not the Scriptures, but the Scriptures know thee ou wilt never know thyself, for the Word of God is quick and erful, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. y and many a time have persons written to me, or spoken with me, said, "Did you intend in the sermon to make a personal allusion to " I have said, "Yes, I did; most certainly I did; but I never saw in my life, and never knew anything about your case, only he that me bade me say this and that, and he knew who would be there to it, and he took care to guide his servant's thought and word, so as it your case to a tittle, so that there could be no mistake about it." letter came to the man's house, as it were, with a full direction, there was no question that God had sent it to his soul. Now, there- my hearer do thou go to the Word of God, and it will speak home ee, if thou goest with the desire to be personally dealt with.

ear friends, he who speaks at this time to you can honestly that he is speaking out the burden of his heart. I came not er to speak with you, young man, without first earnestly asking to irected in each word I say; and what motive can I have in all the d in urging you to seek the Saviour's love but your good? it concern me, think you, at the last day, whether you are saved or If I set Christ before you faithfully, I shall be clear of your blood lly clear—even if you reject my Lord. But I would put my hand ou, as I do not doubt Samuel did on Saul, and plead with you for own sake, for the sake of all the future that lies before you, for ake, perhaps, of some in heaven whose last words were, Follow for the sake of a mother who prays for you, and is praying while are sitting in this house of prayer; above all, for His sake, who

loves to save and delights to bless. Oh, by the wounded hand we sung of just now, and by the broken heart, and by the intense affection of the ever-loving Intercessor for sinners, do stand still a while and seek to know the Word of God. It may be that at this moment thou art put into a position in which thou wilt have to make a choice—a choice for eternity; for heaven or for hell. God save thee from making a fatal choice. There is an engagement for to-morrow which, if you follow it, will be your ruin. Do not fulfil it. May God's Spirit lead you to say at once "I am on God's side; I must be, and I will be. It is done, it is done; if he will have me, he shall have me; if he will wash me, I am ready to be washed; if he will renew me, I am pleading to be renewed; if he will but take me in hand, and bring me to himself, here am I, here am I. 'My Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But receive me, take me back again." Ah, you backslider over there, I pray that you may be led to decide for the kingdom and the anointing, and undergo a change at this very hour. Let this be the time, the set time of mercy to your souls. I should not wonder but that for many years to come, if we are spared, you and I, my friend, who have never spoken together before, may have to rejoice over this present meeting. Samuel was very pleased with Saul for a long time, though unhappily Saul disappointed all his hopes; but I hope I have met with some one anointed of the Lord, whom he intends to bless at this good hour, to whom he will say, "From this day will I bless you. Young heart, thou hast yielded thyself to me, from this day will I comfort thee, bless thee, cheer thee, sanctify thee, instruct thee, cause thee to grow and become strong, and I will use thee in my service, and thou shalt be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." Oh that the clock of destiny would strike to-night, and you would hear it, and solemnly declare,

> "'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
> He drew me, and I follow'd on,
> Charm'd to confess the voice divine."

God grant it for Christ's sake.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel ix., x., 1—13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—512, 507, 505.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JOHN AND HEROD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." —Mark vi. 20.

JOHN sought no honour among men. It was his delight to say concerning our Lord Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Yet, though John sought no honour of men, he had honour; for it is written, "Herod feared John." Herod was a great monarch, John was but a poor preacher whose garment and diet were of the coarsest kind; but "Herod feared John." John was more royal than royal Herod. His character made him the true king, and the nominal king trembled before him. A man is not to be estimated according to his rank, but according to his character. The peerage which God recognises is arranged according to a man's justice and holiness. He is first before God and holy angels who is first in obedience; and he reigns and is made a king and a priest whom God hath sanctified and clothed with the fair white linen of a holy life. Be not covetous of worldly honours, for you will have honour enough even from wicked men if your lives are "holiness unto the Lord."

Let it be written on John's tomb, if he needs an epitaph, "Herod feared John." Only there is one better testimonial which any minister of the gospel might be glad to receive, and it is this: "John did no miracle, but all things which he spake concerning this man were true." He wrought no marvellous work, which astonished his generation, but he spake of Jesus, and all that he said was true: God grant that our Master's servants may win such praise.

My subject at this time does not lead me to speak so much of John as of Herod. I desire to have no Herod in this congregation, but I am anxious about some of you lest you should be like him; therefore I will speak out of the tenderness of my heart with the desire that none of you may follow the steps of this evil king.

I. I would ask you to consider THE HOPEFUL POINTS IN HEROD'S CHARACTER. First, we find that *Herod respected justice and holiness*, for "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy." I I like to see in every man a respect for virtue even if he himself has it not, for it may be that the next step will be to desire it, and he that

desires to be just is almost so. Some have brought their minds to such a pitch of sinfulness that they despise goodness, and ridicule justice and devotion. May God grant that we may never by any process be brought into such a fearful condition as that. When the conscience comes to be so confused as to lose its reverence for that which is good and holy, then is a man in a sad plight indeed. Herod was not in that condition; he honoured justice, honesty, truth, courage, and purity of life. Though he had not these things himself, yet he had a salutary dread of them, which is a near approach to respect for them. I know I am speaking to a great many who respect everything that is good and right; they only wish they were good and right themselves. So far, so good.

The next good point I see in Herod was that *he admired the man in whom he saw justice and righteousness*, and that is a step further; for you may admire an abstract virtue, and yet when you see it actually embodied in a man you may hate him. The ancients recognised justice in Aristides, and yet some of them grew sick of hearing him called "the just." A man may be acknowledged to be just and holy, and for that very reason he may be dreaded. You like to see lions and tigers in the Zoological Gardens, but you would not like to see them in your own room; you would very much prefer to view them behind bars and within cages; and so very many have respect for religion, but religious people they cannot bear. They admire justice! How eloquently they speak of it, but they do not like to deal justly. They admire holiness! but if they come across a saint they persecute him. "Herod feared John," and tolerated John, and went the length of even keeping John for a while out of the hands of Herodias. Many of you like the company of God's people; in fact, you are out of your element when you get with the profane, you cannot endure them, and from those that practise debasing vices you fly at once. You delight in choice company. So far, so good; but that is not enough; we must go much further, or else we may remain like Herod after all.

A third good point about Herod was that *he listened to John*. It is nothing wonderful that you and I should listen to sermons; but it is rather wonderful that a king should do so, and such a king as Herod. Monarchs do not often care for religious discourses, except such as come from court preachers, who wear fine raiment, and use soft speech. John was not the kind of man for a king's palace—too rough, too blunt, too plain-speaking; his words thrust too much home: yet Herod heard him gladly. It was a hopeful point in his character that he would hear a man who preached justice, holiness, and the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It is a fine point and a hopeful point in any man that he will hear and listen to an honest proclamation of God's word, even though it come home to his conscience. Perhaps I address some of you who hear the gospel only now and then; and when you drop into a religious meeting you are like the dog in the library who would gladly have changed all the books for a single bone. There are many such people in London. Religion does not suit them: places of entertainment are much more to their minds. Some say of the preacher, "I won't hear him again, he cuts too closely; he is too personal." John said to Herod that it was not lawful for him to

brother's wife; but, though he spoke so plainly, Herod listened
ecause "he was a just man and an holy." That was well of
nd it is well in you, my friend, if you are willing to hear the
owever practically it is spoken. So far, so good.
ere was a better point still in Herod; *he obeyed the word* to
listened. Herod heard John gladly, "And when he heard
id many things." Many of our hearers do nothing; they hear,
r, they hear, and that is the end of it. They learn the way,
w the way, they are expert in the way, but they do not follow
They hear the gospel invitation, but they come not to the feast.
m to think that religious duty lies in hearing first, and talking
ls; but they are mistaken. Herod knew better than that. He
hearer only, he did *do* something, and it is remarkable that
tells us that "he did *many things*." Perhaps these were some
any things:—he discharged a tax-gatherer who imposed upon
le, or righted the wrongs of a neglected widow, or altered a
which he had promulgated, or changed his habits and manners
respects; certainly in many points he was an improved man,
the Baptist had an influence with him for good, "For Herod
ohn, and when he heard him he did many things." I am
to some who, when they hear a sermon, put a part of it into
and they have done many things since they first attended
which we are very grateful. I have known a man become
with the gospel, and he has given up his drunkenness, and his
breaking, and he has tried, and succeeded, in a great measure,
g off profane language, and thus he has greatly improved. And
yet he is only a Herod, after all; for Herod *was* Herod, after
one many things; and, in his heart, he was still prepared for
of wickedness. Yet he did amend somewhat, and so far, so

was another point about Herod, namely, that *he continued to*
preacher gladly; for it is put into the end of the verse as if to
that he heard John still. John touched his conscience; but
, he still *heard him gladly*. He said, "Send for John the
gain." Harry the Eighth would listen to Hugh Latimer though
nced him to his face, and even sent him on his birthday a hand-
on which was marked the text, "Whoremongers and adulterers
judge." Hal cried, "Let us hear honest Hugh Latimer." Even
admire those who tell them truth. However unwelcome the
they believe it to be honestly spoken, and therefore they respect
her. A good point this. You who are present and unconverted
rd most cutting sentences from me, you have heard of "judgment
" and of that eternal wrath which rests upon those who die in
: let me warn you then, that if, after hearing the denunciations
Word, you are still willing to hear, I have great hopes of you.
good.
was yet one other point about Herod, and that is, *his conscience*
tly affected through the preaching of John; for I am inclined
that a certain translation, which renders the passage, "Herod
y things," in another way, may be a correct one, "Herod was
," or, "Herod was made to hesitate." Such a sense is found in

some manuscripts. He loved his sin, and he could see a "beauty of holiness" in religion, and he wished to be holy; but there was Herodias, and he could not give her up. When he heard a sermon, he was like a relative of his in after days, "almost persuaded," yet he did not give up his lust. He could not go the whole length John would have him go. He could not leave his bosom sin, and yet he felt as if he wished to leave it. There was a halting between two opinions, a hesitating, a wavering: he was inclined to good if he could have good and have his pleasure too; but his pleasure was so very much his master that he could not escape from it. He was like a bird taken with lime-twigs: he wanted to fly; but, sad to say, he was willingly held, limed by his lust. This is the case with many of our hearers. Their consciences are not weaned from their sins; they cannot give them up, and yet they wish they could. They linger on the brink, and fear to launch away. They are almost out of Sodom, have almost escaped the fire shower, and yet in all probability they will stand like Lot's wife, a pillar of salt, because they will look back, and love the sin that lingers in their heart. Consciences nowadays seem to have gone out of fashion; but to have a conscience sensitive to the preaching of the Word is an admirable thing; and if you have such a thing, so far, so good.

II. There were six good points about Herod, then. But now, very sorrowfully, I want to indicate THE FLAWS IN THE CASE OF HEROD. The first flaw was this, that *though he loved John, he never looked to John's Master.* John never wanted anybody to be *his* disciple, but he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God." Herod was, after a sort, a follower of John, but never a follower of Jesus. It is easy for you to hear the preacher and love him and admire him, and yet the preacher's Master may be all unknown to you. I pray you, dear friends, do not let this be the case with any of you. I am the bridegroom's friend, and I shall rejoice greatly when the bridegroom wins your hearts. God forbid that my ministry should ever lead you to myself and cause you to stop there. We are only sign-posts pointing to Christ. Go beyond us. Be ye followers of us as far as we are followers of Christ, but in no other respect. It is to Christ you must go: the end of all our ministry is Christ Jesus. We want you to go to him direct, to seek from him pardon, from him redemption, from him a change of heart, from him a new life; for vain will it be if you have listened to the most faithful of preachers, and have not listened to the preacher's Master and obeyed his gospel. You will be Herods, and nothing more, unless grace leads you to Jesus Christ.

The second flaw about Herod's case was this, that *he had no respect for goodness in his own heart.* He admired it in another, but there was none of it in himself. Our Saviour described Herod admirably. What a master-sketcher of human portraits was Christ! He said of Herod, "Go ye and tell that fox." Herod was a foxy man, selfish, full of tricks; timid when he was in the presence of his superiors, but both cruel and bold when he was in the presence of those who could not defend themselves. We sometimes meet with these foxy people; they want to go to heaven, but they like the road to hell. They will sing a hymn to Jesus; but a good roaring song they like also when they get merry companions together. By all manner of means, a guinea to the church. Oh yes! admirable thing. But how many guineas are spent upon some secret

lust? So many try to dodge between God and Satan. They do not want to fall foul of either; they hold with the hare and run with the hounds: they admire all that is good, but they do not want to have too much of it themselves. It might be inconvenient to carry the cross of Christ on their own shoulders and become precise and exact in their own lives, yet they never say a word against other people doing so. It is a fatal flaw to have no root in yourself—a damning flaw, condemning your own self, —to know the right and disregard it, to feel respect for it and yet trample it under foot. I judge that the doom of such will be far more dreadful than that of those who never knew the good, who were trained up in the purlieus of vice, and never had a glimpse of holiness or purity, and therefore never deliberately turned away from them.

Another flaw in Herod's character was that *he never loved the word of God, as God's word.* He admired John, and probably said, "That is the man for me. See how boldly he delivers his Master's message: that is the man I should like to hear." But he never said to himself, "God sent John; God speaks to me through John; oh that I might learn what John is speaking, and be instructed and improved by the word John is uttering, because it is God's word." No, no. I do pray you, ask yourselves, dear hearers, whether this may not apply to you. May it not be that you listen to a sermon because it is Mr. So-and-so's discourse, and you admire the preacher? It will be fatal to you if you treat the word in that way. It must be to you what it is in truth, the the word of God, or it will not save you. It will never impress your soul unless you accept it as the word of God, and bow before it, and desire to feel all its power as coming to you fresh from the lips of God, and sent into your heart by his Holy Spirit.

Now, we know Herod did not receive the word as the word of God because he was a picker and chooser in reference to it. He did not like John's discourse when he spoke of the seventh commandment. If he spoke of the fourth commandment he would say, "That is admirable; the Jews ought to keep it": but when he dealt with the seventh commandment Herod and Herodias would say, "We do not think preachers should allude to such subjects." I have always noticed that people who live in the practice of vice think the servants of God ought not to allude to things so coarse. We are allowed to denounce the sins of the man-in-the-moon and the vices of savages in the middle of Africa; but as to the everyday vices of this city of London, if we put our finger upon them in God's name, then straightway some one cries, "It is indelicate to allude to these things." John dealt with the whole word of God, and he did not only say, "Behold the Lamb of God"; but he cried, "The axe is laid to the root of the trees." He spoke plainly to the conscience. Herod, therefore, had this fatal flaw in his character that he did not attend to *all* that John delivered of the word of God: he liked one part, and did not like another. He resembled those who prefer a doctrinal discourse, but cannot endure the precepts of God's word. I hear one exclaim, "I like practical discourses; I do not want any doctrine." Don't you? There is doctrine in God's word, and you are to receive what God gives you: not half a Bible, but the whole truth as it is in Jesus. That was a great fault in Herod; he did not receive the testimony of John as the word of God.

Next, Herod did *many* things, but *he did not do all things*. He who receives the word of God in truth, does not only attempt to do many things; but he tries to do all that is right. He does not give up one vice, or a dozen vices, but he endeavours to forsake every false way, and seeks to be delivered from every iniquity. Herod did not care for a thorough reformation, for that would call for too great a self-denial. He had one sin he wished to keep, and when John spoke plainly about that he would not listen to him.

Another fault with Herod was that *he was under the sway of sin*. He had given himself up to Herodias. She was his own niece, and had been married to his own brother, and was the mother of children by his own brother, and yet he led her away from his own brother's house that she might become his wife; he, himself, casting off one who had been a good and faithful wife to him for years. It is a mess of filthy incest one hardly likes to think of. The influence of this woman was his curse and ruin. How many men have been destroyed in that way! How many women are ruined daily in this city by coming under the vicious influence of others! My dear men and women, you will have to stand before God on your own account. Do not let anyone cast a spell over you. I pray you, escape for your life; run for it when vice hunts you. I may be sent at this moment with a word on purpose for you, to stir up your conscience, and arouse you to a sense of your danger. It is always perilous to be under the influence of an unconverted person, however moral he may be, but it is supremely dangerous to be under the fascination of a wicked woman or a vicious man. God help you to rise above it by his Spirit, for if you are hearers of the word and doers of evil, you will end in being Herods, and nothing more.

I will only allude to another point in Herod's character, that *his religion*, although it made him do many things, *was rather one of fear than of love*. It is not said that Herod feared God, but that he "feared *John*." He did not *love* John: he "*feared* John." The whole thing was a matter of fear. He was not a lion, you see; he was a fox—fearful, timid, ready to run away from every barking cur.

There are many people whose whole religion lies in fear. With some it is the fear of men—the fear of what people would say if they did not pretend to be religious—the fear of what their Christian associates would think of them if they were not reputable. With others there is the fear that some awful judgment would come upon them. But the mainspring of the religoin of Christ is love. Oh! to love the gospel, to delight in the truth, to rejoice in holiness: this is genuine conversion. The fear of death, and the fear of hell, create a poor, poor faith, which leaves men on Herod's level still.

III. I conclude by showing you very sorrowfully WHAT BECAME OF HEROD. With all his good points he ended most wretchedly. First, *he slew the preacher whom he once respected*. It was he who did it, though the executioner was the instrument. He said, "Go and fetch John the Baptist's head in a charger." So it has happened with many hopeful hearers; they have become slanderers and persecutors of the very preachers before whom they once trembled, and far as they could they have taken off their heads. After a time men dislike being rebuked, and they proceed in their dislike till they scoff at the things

hey once reverenced, and make the name of Christ a football for their jests. Beware! I pray you, beware! for the way of sin is downhill. Herod feared John, and yet he beheaded him. A person may be evangelical and Calvinistic, and so on, and yet, if he is placed under certain conditions, he may become a hater and a persecutor of the truth he once avowed.

Herod went a step lower, however; for this Herod Antipas was the man who *afterwards mocked the Saviour*. It is said, "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe." This is the man that "did many things" under the leading of John. His course is altered now. He spits on the Redeemer and insults the Son of God. Certain of the most outrageous blasphemers of the gospel were originally Sunday-school scholars and teachers, young men who were "almost persuaded," yet they halted and hesitated, and wavered until they made the plunge and became much worse than they possibly could have become if they had not seen the light of truth. If the devil wants raw material to make a Judas, "the son of perdition," he takes an apostle to work upon. When he takes a thoroughly bad character like Herod, it is necessary to make him plastic as Herod had been in the hands of John. Somehow or other, border men are the worst enemies. In the old wars between England and Scotland, the borderers were the fighting men; and so the border people will do more harm than any until we get them on this side of the frontier. Oh that the grace of God may decide those who now hesitate!

I may mention to you that, before long, Herod *lost all the power he possessed*. He was a foxy man, and always tried to win power, but in the end he was recalled by the Roman emperor in disgrace. That was the end of him. Many a man has given up Christ for honour, and has lost himself as well as lost Christ. Like the man who, in the old Catholic persecuting times, was brought to prison for the faith. He said he loved the Protestant faith; but he cried, "I cannot burn." So he denied the faith, and in the dead of night his house took fire: the man who could not burn was forced to burn, but he had no comfort in that burning, for he had denied his Lord. If you sell Christ for a mess of pottage it will scald your lips; it will burn within your soul like molten lead for ever; for "the wages of sin is death." However bright the golden coin shines, and however musical may be its chink, it will prove an awful curse to the man who sells his Lord to gain it.

To-day the name of Herod is *infamous for ever*. As long as there is a Christian church, the name of Herod will be execrated. And is it not a solemn reflection, that "Herod feared John, and did many things, and heard him gladly"? I know that no young man here believes that he will ever turn out to be a Herod. I might, like the prophet, say, "Thou wilt do this, and do that," and you would answer, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But you *will* do it, unless you are decided for God.

An appeal like this once startled me. When I was young and tender, there was a hopeful youth who went to school with me, who was held up to me as an example. He was a good boy, and I used to feel no particular affection for his name, because I was so perpetually chided by his goodness, and I was so far removed from it. Being younger than he,

I saw him enter upon his apprenticeship, enter upon the gaieties of a great city and come back dishonoured. It horrified me. Might not I dishonour my character? And when I found that if I gave myself to Christ he would give me a new heart and a right spirit, and when I read that promise of the covenant, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," it seemed to me like a Character Insurance Society. If I believed in Jesus Christ my character was insured; for Christ would enable me to walk in the paths of holiness: this charmed me into desiring an interest in Christ.

If you would not like to be a Herod, be a disciple of Jesus Christ; for there will be no choice for some of you. Some of you are of such powerful natures that you must either thoroughly serve Christ or serve the devil. An old Scotchman was once looking at Rowland Hill, and the good old gentleman said, "What are you looking at?" He said, "The lines of your face." "What do you think of them?" He replied, "I think that if you had not been a Christian man, you would have been an awful sinner." Some people are of that sort; they are like a pendulum; they must swing one way or the other. Oh that you may swing Christ's way to-night. Cry, "Lord, help me to cleanse my way; help me to be wholly thine; help me to possess the righteousness I admire, the holiness I respect. Help me, not only to do *some* things, but everything thou wouldst have me to do. Take me, make me thine, and I will rejoice and joy in him who helps me to be holy." God bless you, dear friends, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark vi. 7.—32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—483, 643, 992.

One Penny Each. In neat Wrapper.

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Specially adapted for gratuitous distribution.

TOKEN FOR THE BEREAVED.
LET US PRAY.
CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.
SERMON FOR EVERYBODY.
HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH.
IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?
THE TURNING POINT.
A SPUR FOR A FREE HORSE.
BELLS FOR THE HORSES.
THE WAR HORSE.
GOD'S JEWELS.
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.
CONFESSION OF SIN.
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION.
THE WAY OF SALVATION.
INFANT SALVATION.
HOW TO RAISE THE DEAD.
NONE BUT JESUS.
THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY.
THE SILVER TRUMPET.
JESUS AND THE LAMBS.
A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.
THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH.
BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS.
LOVING ADVICE for ANXIOUS SEEKERS.
THE UPPER HAND.
A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.
LANDLORD AND TENANT
A DOUBLE KNOCK AT THE DOOR OF THE YOUNG.
THERE GO THE SHIPS.
LITTLE DOGS.
THE SILLY DOVE.
THE HOLD FAST.
RECEIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD.
AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY FOR A BELOVED SON.
NUMBER 1500, OR LIFTING UP THE BRAZEN SERPENT.
THE PEARL OF PATIENCE.
FEAR NOT.
THE SEA! THE SEA! THE WIDE AND OPEN SEA!

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 4TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."—Revelation xxi. 6.

SALVATION is no small thing. It filled the heart and hands of the Son of God, and therefore it ought not to be neglected by us. The precious promise before us concerns the gift of eternal salvation, and it is set forth as the personal word of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The apostle is very careful to make this clear, for he inserts the words, "And he said unto me"; as if he knew that poor, troubled hearts might doubt so large a promise were they not assured that Jesus himself had expressly given it. John is a faithful and true witness; in this, as in another case he could have written, "He knoweth that he saith true." He declares to us that he who is Alpha and Omega, himself gave unto him this word of promise. So specially careful was our Lord that the gospel of grace should be published correctly, and without fail, that he delivered it himself to John, and also said to him, "Write: for these words are true and faithful." Not content with committing the message in words to the apostle, he charges him there and then to put it down in black and white that it might never be forgotten. Thus he proved that he assuredly meant what he said, and meant that it should stand good through all ages: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

It is to be noticed, too, that our Lord spoke these words as a king: "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new"; and then he added, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountian of the water of life freely." Divine sovereignty, therefore, is not opposed to the most generous promises of the gospel. Jesus Christ may give or withhold as he pleases; but his will is to give. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but the stern truth of his infinite sovereignty is coupled with the sweet declaration of boundless charity—"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." However much we preach the doctrines of election and divine sovereignty, we never intend to limit the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; but as freely

if you drink you shall live; but a mere sense of need will not afford you relief.

Remember also that certain pains which are supposed to be a part of spiritual thirst are not necessarily connected with it. When a man is seeking Christ it often happens that the devil comes in and suggests all manner of blasphemies and despairing thoughts. Do not be so foolish as to conclude that you are not thirsting after Christ because you have happily been free from these diabolical insinuations. They are not the work of the Spirit of God: they are malicious inventions of the devil, and you are infinitely better without them than with them. I have heard of a convert who was years before he could trust the Saviour because he thought himself to be so great a sinner that the Lord could not possibly save him. Do not imitate so bad an example. Unbelieving thoughts are no part of thirsting after Christ, and they are not to be desired, but dreaded. Be very thankful if you can get to the Lord Jesus easily: it is a choice privilege. You know that you need Christ; you are sure that Christ can supply your need; therefore come and take him without doubt or questioning. Simple unquestioning faith is the very best way to come to Jesus, for it gives us speedy comfort, and yields to our Lord great honour. People are very foolish when they look upon the diseases of Christians as if they were beauties. Young children have a great many little complaints before they grow up to be men; I need not mention them: every mother knows what a succession of troubles visit a numerous family. But suppose you knew one who had escaped these infantine disorders, what would you think of him if he were to murmur, "I don't think I can have been born; I don't think I can have life, for I never felt those complaints of infancy, which other people speak of." You would say, "You silly man, you ought to be glad that you had such a healthy childhood. Diseases are in a measure marks of life, for we may be sure that the dead do not suffer from them; but they are not necessary as proofs of vitality; neither are doubts, despondencies, and despairs at all needful as tokens of regeneration. Do you need Christ? Do you desire him? Do you seek him? Then you are included in this text: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Do not look upon your thirst as a preparation for Christ, for thus you will be seduced into making a Christ out of your own needs, and that will be ridiculous and ruinous. What would you think of a man who expected to find a remedy in his disease? He must be bereft of reason who expects to find an antidote within the poison. In our case we have to deal with an omnipotent Physician, and however remarkable may be the development of our disease, the Lord Jesus knows the case, and is able to overcome all the difficulties of it, and bring us sound health. Therefore, come and trust him. Dost thou perceive thy nature's great and urgent want of Christ, and dost thou desire Christ? If so, this text is for thee, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Thirst is a desire arising out of a need. Now, so long as you have that desire, you need not stop to question your right to take Christ. A man is thirsty, even if he cannot explain what thirst is and how it comes. I must confess, myself, that I could not give you a physiological account of the origin and effect of the phenomenon of thirst. I suppose that certain

organs which require moisture begin to dry up or collapse without it, and so disarrange the functions and cause pain. If I were some learned anatomist I could give you a lecture upon the theory of thirst; and yet, though I cannot do this, I know practically what thirst is as well as a doctor could tell me. When I am thirsty, and am invited to drink, I do not refuse because I cannot explain my thirst. Nor is there any absolute necessity, in order to salvation, that you should know all about how it is that Christ can supply your needs. I may not be able to explain scientifically why this glass of water quenches my thirst, but I know that it does so: the liquid gets at the various organs and supplies them with what they require. I know enough about water to drink it when I am in need, and, practically, that is all that is wanted. If you know enough about Christ to understand that he can meet every need of your soul, and if you take him to be your all in all, the matter is done. Remember, Jesus Christ often saves poor, simple-minded men when he does not save philosophers. If you take the Lord Jesus to be yours you shall as truly have the benefit of his salvation as if you were a father in Israel.

Let us notice once again that being thirsty is not enough. The text promiseth water from the fountain of life to the man that is athirst; but *thirst cannot quench thirst.* Some seekers act as if they thought it would. "Oh," say they, "I am not thirsty enough; I wish I felt my need more": but, my dear friend, your thirst will not be quenched by being increased. "I should have some hope," says one, "if I were more sensible of my danger." Yet that is not a gospel hope. Why should a man's despairing because of his danger operate to deliver him from danger? As long as you stop where you are you may get more and more sensible of danger, until you reach the sensitiveness of morbid despondency; but you will be no nearer salvation. It is not your sense of need, it is Christ's power to bless you, and your yielding yourself up to Christ, that will bring you salvation. The remedy for the thirsty soul is very plainly hinted at in the text. What does a thirsty man do to get rid of his thirst? He drinks. Perhaps there is no better representation of faith in all the Word of God than that. To drink is to receive—to take in the refreshing draught—and that is all. A man's face may be unwashed, but yet he can drink; he may be a very unworthy character, but yet a draught of water will remove his thirst. Drinking is such a remarkably easy thing, it is even more simple than eating. I heard the other day of a sad, sad case of a workman with cancer of the tongue who cannot eat. He has not taken solid victuals for six months, but still he can receive food by drinking. When people are dying you can still moisten their lips: when nothing else can possibly pass their throats they can receive liquid. So, dear soul, whatever thy state may be, thou canst surely receive Christ, for he comes to thee like a cup of cold water. Does not water run down the throat of itself? So is it with the gospel. Only be willing to open your mouth to have it, and it is yours. Nothing is simpler. Sometimes divines explain faith until nobody knows what it is; and often and often I have known sinners look at their faith until they have quite forgotten to look to Jesus. This is as foolish as if a man desired to see a star, and having found a telescope, stood gazing *at* it instead of *through* it. How much he thinks of

his telescope. He lengthens and shortens the tube, and examines it up and down to see whether it is a good instrument. But he does not see the star! No, and he never will till he uses the telescope properly and looks through it. Do not think of believing in your own faith, but believe in Jesus. Subordinate faith to Christ; it would be ill indeed to prefer your cup to the fountain. When you want comfort, neither muse upon your need, nor study yourself, nor weigh your faith; but set your whole mind upon *him* who is heaven's glory and the sinner's only hope. The essence of faith lies in having done with self and in receiving from without, and that, not by any laborious process, but as easily as men receive water by drinking. We do not drink by machinery; we just open our mouths and suffer the water to run down; even thus we receive Christ. Be willing to have grace; be ready, as it were, to imbibe it by the mouth of faith. O blessed faith, which is nothing of itself and yet enriches its possessor! O blessed grace, divine living water, which is ours as soon as ever we are willing to have it!

Surely there is sweet encouragement here to those poor souls who have said, "I cannot trust Christ; I dare not receive him." You may freely receive him, and if you do but get him, he will never take himself away from you. If I were very, very thirsty, and I found myself in your room, and saw water on the table, I would not ask whether I might drink; I would drink first, and ask you afterwards, knowing that you could not take it away from me after I had once drank it. A poor dog stands at the door of a butcher's shop. He sees meat, but he does not know whether he may have it. If he is very, very hungry he makes a snatch at it; and when he once gets it he runs off to eat it, for he knows that although the butcher may take it away from him when it is in his mouth, he cannot take it from him after he has eaten it. Now then, needy ones, receive the grace of God into your inmost hearts, receive Jesus into yourselves, and there is no possibility that he will be taken away from you. Drink, thirsty one; drink to the full; thou canst never be deprived of that which thou hast received into thine inmost self.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain the text; I hope I have not darkened what I wished to set in clearest light. O Spirit of God, make men see this open secret, this plain riddle of drinking at the fount of grace!

II. We are to speak secondly by way of ENCOURAGEMENT. I am going to dwell upon this figure of thirst as it is used in the Scriptures, that I may lead every soul that feels its need of Christ to take him at once. The first encouragement is this, *our Lord Jesus Christ keeps open house for all thirsty ones.* Kindly turn to the Word of God, for we must back up everything with Scripture this morning: let us read the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Revelation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." No voice at Christ's door saith, "Stay away"; but three voices join with his in crying, "Come." The Spirit and the bride, and he that heareth, all cry, "Come," "Come," "Come." No officer stands at the door to sort out the comers, and to say, "This may come, and the other may not"; but the invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Said I not

truly that Christ keeps open house? What can be more free or more comprehensive than this? Only publish it in your neighbourhood that you intend to keep open house for a day, and that everybody who comes may eat and drink what he likes at your expense; you need not advertize it many times in the newspapers; only tell a few of the hungry brotherhood, and they will swarm like bees. I will warrant you a full table from early dawn to set of sun in any of our crowded quarters, if you will only provide the best meat and say, "whosoever will, let him come." How strange it is! How sadly strange, that our Lord Jesus keeps open house, with better viands than prince ever put upon his table, and yet men will not come. They crowd for the bread of the body, but neglect their souls. Our Lord bids us go into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come, for otherwise it seems they would rather perish with hunger and thirst than partake of the provisions of his grace. O, sirs, if ye do perish, it is no fault of Christ's, for his table is furnished, and the entrance to his banquet-hall is free. In his name do I declare the absolute freeness of his grace. He has taken the doors from off the hinges to set his hall wide open; he has put away all sentinels from his table, and ordained that none of his servants may hinder coming souls. Our orders are, "Whosoever will, let him come," and it would be a plain violation of our Master's orders if we were to hinder any. His generous invitation is, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now, as if it were not enough to keep open house, our Lord Jesus goes further; for in the next place, *he issues many invitations of the freest kind.* I will only quote one out of very many. Turn to the first verse of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Grace must be gratis; the word "*freely*" in our text makes it clear that salvation is an absolute gift, but here the fact is put in a negative form that there may be no mistake whatever. Mercy is "without money and without price"—without price in any possible sense. We neither purchase, nor procure, nor earn, nor produce salvation by merit, effort, sacrifice, or service. It comes to us, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. We are blessed with it out of the goodwill and pleasure of the Lord, and we do not purchase it by good deeds, good desires, or pious resolves, or persevering endeavours. We are empty and he fills us. In order that you may come to Jesus, no preparation is required. You may come just as you are, and come at once: only confess that you need him, desire to have him, and then take him by trusting him. He is like wine and milk, supplying delight and satisfaction, and you are to take him as men would take a drink. How could the invitation be put more broadly than it is? How could it be uttered more earnestly? It has a "Ho!" to give it tongue. Tradesmen in certain parts of London stand outside of their shops and cry "Buy, buy!" or call out "Ho!" to the passers-by because they are anxious to sell their wares. Jesus is yet more eager to distribute his rich grace, for he longs to see men saved. Ho! ye that pass by, stop here awhile: turn your attention this way: here is something worthy of your thoughts. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come

ye to the waters, and he that hath no money." There are many such invitations in the Scriptures, and if not all expressed by the same metaphor, they are all equally as free and as clear as the one before us. Jesus entreats men to look to him and live: he bids them come to him and find rest unto their souls.

Does any one say "Well, I know that the ever-blessed Saviour keeps open house, and that he invites men freely; but still I am afraid to come"? Peradventure, dear friend, we may overcome your diffidence by the help of God if we remind you that *our Lord makes a proclamation*, which has the weight of his personal dignity about it, and comes as from a king. Turn to the seventh of John, thirty-seventh verse:—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is the sovereign word of the King of kings. Standing up in the midst of the multitude, he proclaimed his own full and free salvation, and with his own voice declared the day of grace, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." O anxious enquirer, what more do you want? I wish you could picture Jesus standing in our midst this morning and using such words! But if you cannot, if neither faith nor imagination can help you to realize his presence, still he is here, and by the mouth of his servant he still cries in the place of concourse, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Will you not come? What is it keeps you back? The call is to any man, any woman, any child, anybody: anyone that needs mercy, anyone who desires salvation, let him come and have Jesus and eternal life. If you think yourself an outcast, if you seem shut out with seven bolted doors, yet do not take upon yourself the responsibility of condemning yourself. Come and try! If you thirst, come to Christ, and he will give you grace at once.

Peradventure a trembler replies, "Ay! here is a proclamation; but I should be more comforted if I could read *promises*." Our text is one of the freest promises possible,—"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Come and test the promise now and see if it be not true. But if you require another, turn to a grand gospel chapter in Isaiah, the forty-first, and let me read you the seventeenth verse. Will not this suit you? "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Now then, you that cannot pray; you that are so dried up with inward drought that you cannot get the words out, and scarcely feel the desires within; all you whose very hearts do fail you so that you despair of hope, believe this promise of God, who cannot lie, and plead it before him. See if God will not open for you fountains on the very mountain tops, where you could least expect them, and give you comfort which you looked not for. Shall I quote another promise out of many? There is a sound of abundant refreshment in it. It is in the forty-fourth of Isaiah, second verse: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." He will not only give you enough to drink,

but pour it on you to drench you with delight. Your hot and weary feet shall be ready to start again upon the journey of life, because washed and cleansed by love. There is grace enough in God to allow it to be lavished *upon you*. If I were in your case, poor thirsty soul, I would catch at such a promise as that. "Lord," I would say, "I long to have thee: I know I cannot be saved without thee; I am sure that thou canst save me; and lo! I trust thee. If I die, I will die trusting in thee! You are saved, my brother. There is no fear that God will ever reject a soul that has come to this pass; he will pour floods upon you yet.

Our gracious Lord, still further to encourage souls to come to him, has been pleased to give many *gracious explanations* of what he meant. You will find one in the fourth chapter of John. How sweetly he explained to the woman at the well what living water is, and what drinking of it is. He tells you that, by believing in him, you receive into yourself everlasting life. Further on, in the sixth chapter of John, at the thirty-fifth verse, he shows what drinking of the living water is: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

I have opened up the plan of salvation many, many times, but I will try again. To be saved you must heartily trust Christ, and him alone. You are to believe *on* him. First believe him;—that is, be convinced that what he says is true: and then believe *on* him,—that is, depend upon what he has done, and on what he is. He will make his word good to you. Commit your soul to the Redeemer's keeping, and he will keep it safely.

"Venture on him; venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

There is no venture, but I put it so that you may catch the idea. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Hold on to Jesus as to a life-buoy. Buckle your fate to Jesus, to sink or swim with him. If he is a Saviour, trust him; put all your eggs into this basket; float all your treasures in this vessel. Let it be so that if he can and will save sinners he will save you. His word is pledged that he will save all those who trust him, accept that word as infallible, and confide all your future to its truth. This is *the* way of life. I tell you, beloved hearers, that my own personal hope lies altogether in the hand of my Lord, and in no degree elsewhere. I have now known the Lord some thirty years or more, and at this moment if any one should ask me what is my hope of eternal life, I can only answer that it is just what it was thirty years ago, namely, the work and death of the Lord Jesus in my room and stead. "Have you not preached the gospel for years?" Yes, I have, with all my might, and I have by God's blessing brought many thousands to repentance and faith; but I do not in the slightest degree rest my hope of heaven upon my preaching. Whatever the Lord enables me to do for him is his doing and his work, and he alone must have the glory of it; I dare not claim a grain of merit for it. I have only Christ to trust to, and I want no more. I have no righteousness of my own, but I trust to free grace and dying love. The cross will float me into the port of peace; if it does not I must be lost, for every other life-boat has gone to the bottom long ago. Christ Jesus is my hope, and I am persuaded that

he is a Saviour as suitable for you as he is for me. You young man over there, who are about the age which I had reached when I first trusted Christ, I pray you look to him at once. Cease to be always looking to self. If you are thirsty, what is the good of looking down your own throat? What is the good of complaining that you feel too thirsty, or not thirsty enough? Man! rise up and drink. Poor sinner, get away from thyself to Christ, and take Christ into thyself as a man takes water into his body by simply drinking it. Take Christ to be your own Saviour, receive him to be your sole reliance; and you are a saved man. His sacred Book declares the believer to be saved, and if you, being a believer, are not saved, then none of us can have a hope.

Furthermore, our blessed Lord, in order to make this very plain, has set before us *lively emblems*. He gives us the figure of the rock in the wilderness. You remember how he supplied Israel's needs from day to day till he brought them into rest. The sun blazed upon the desert sands, and the pilgrims were sorely tried with thirst, so that they murmured, and thought it better to die than to suffer such inward burning. How were their pains removed? Moses with his rod struck the rock, and out leaped a stream of which they drank with eager joy. Can you not see them bowing down for a draught, or holding their vessels at the place where first the water springs forth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the smitten rock, whence flow life and refreshing to all who will accept the grace. All the need of your spirit, my hearer, will be supplied if you are willing to take of this water of life freely. Come, dip your earthen vessel into this heavenly river, and thirst no more. A smitten Saviour is the one hope of a sorrowing sinner. Read Psalm cvii. 5, and you will find another symbol, or rather the same in a fresh form. "They wandered in the wilderness, where there is no way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." We are at this moment a great caravan travelling across this wilderness world. We are all in need, and God only can supply us, but, blessed be his name, that he will do if we cry to him in our trouble, and are willing to receive the grace which he gives us in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Beloved, the very cup of communion, and the whole communion table itself, is meant, among other gracious lessons, to teach us the way of salvation. Here is bread. What am I to do with it? Look at it? study it? analyse it? I may if I choose, but that is not what it was meant for: it was intended to be eaten; use it that way and you use it well. The wine, too, is meant to be drunk; it is not placed upon the table to be gazed upon, or to be quarrelled over, or to be distilled, but to be drank. This is an act which any thirsty person can perform. You poor souls who cannot do any good thing, surely you can receive of the food which your heavenly Father provides. If you cannot bear fruit and so give something out, you can take something in. If there be nothing in you, there is all the more room to receive of the divine fulness. Oh then, let the communion cup, concerning which the Saviour said, "Drink,"—let that tell you how to receive Christ, how to be saved by heartily accepting Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in his wisdom has given us, in addition, many

encouraging *instances* of men who have thirsted for grace. I will not detain you with many of them. We sang a part of the forty-second psalm this morning, where David said he longed for the living God as the hart panteth after the water brooks. Further on in the sixty-third psalm he cries "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," and a few verses down he sings, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." If you thirst after God you shall soon be satisfied. May your thirst increase until you get him, and then shall you be filled to the full.

Once more. *Our Lord has been pleased to give his own special blessing to the thirsty ones;* for, when he opened his mouth upon the mountain and gave out the benedictions which commence his memorable sermon, he said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Oh! then, ye thirsty ones, you are blessed in your very desires and longings.

I do not know what more to say to you. What more could even inspiration utter? This blessed Book has set before you such a wealth of precious things that one can barely imagine more. What is wanted is that the truth be applied, and that you do now come and take Christ. I beg you to recollect that you must take Christ by a personal act, each one for himself or herself. Each one must willingly believe, for God forces Christ on nobody. If I am thirsty I must drink; no well or river can quench my thirst if I do not personally drink. It stands just thus, dear soul: you must accept Christ or you are lost. Be sure of this, that God himself cannot, will not, save you unless you accept Christ. He is omnipotent, but he cannot act contrary to his own solemn declaration, and he has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned"; if you do not believe in Christ you must be lost to a certainty. You must yourself believe or be a castaway. Do not think that the grace of repentance or faith will be wrought in you against your will. You labour under a great mistake if you think so. You must joyfully take Christ or die in your sins. Why should you not take him? Is this some bitter medicine I am pressing on you, and are you a silly child who must be coaxed into taking it? No, I set before you the Lord Jesus, who is sweetness itself. Why should you need persuading? Do you secretly hope that there may be some other salvation? You are greatly deceived if you do, for the Son of God would not have died to save if it could have been done in any other way. Of no other fountain can you drink. What keeps you back from this? Are you trying to find reasons why you should not come to Christ? That is ruinous to yourself. Few persons hunt up arguments against themselves. If there is any money in dispute in a court of law each party will hunt out reasons for his having it; but I never saw a man stand up in court and plead against his own interests. Will *you* turn advocate for the devil against yourself? Will you urge arguments to seal your own condemnation? When Jesus Christ says, "Let him that is athirst come," will you stand in your own way and block up your own path to life? Will you give God the lie for the sake of destroying your own soul? Surely a mania must be upon you! It is the wisest thing to say, "I am an undeserving, hell-deserving sinner; but if God is infinite in mercy, why should he not save me as well as anyone else? He declares that

if I trust his Son he will pardon me: I will trust his Son and partake of his forgiveness. He bids me drink of the water of life: I will drink. I will not question my right to come: he bids me do so, and I will obey. I take him at his word: I trust in the blood of Jesus. Lord, receive me, for I receive thy Son. I have been trying to save myself, and waiting until I felt something, or did something, in and of myself; but now, Lord, although I neither see nor feel anything but my lost estate, I do believe that Jesus can save me, and I trust on him." If this be your true act, dear hearer, you are a saved man. Even if you only believed a minute ago, you have passed from death to life. The moment a sinner believes he is justified; the atoning blood operates the moment faith sees it. O thou who hast but this instant believed, go thy way and rejoice; thou art in the hand of Jesus, and none can pluck thee thence.

I have thus tried to preach a very plain sermon, containing the A B C of the gospel. I believe that God will bless it to the conversion of many: I shall be terribly disappointed if he does not. I have entreated him to let his own message have free course and mighty effect, and I know that he will hear me. I beg God's people to pray that this sermon may enclose within the gospel net more fish than ever we have had before. Some of you seekers have hitherto thought the door of mercy to be bolted against you. See, it stands wide open. Come and welcome. If any softness of feeling is stealing over you let it work while you gladly yield. Do not talk nonsense on the way home, and so lose the effect of the discourse. Hasten to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and rise not till you have accepted Jesus as your own Saviour. If you do so salvation will have come to your house this day, and God will be glorified. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John iv. 1—42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42, 805, 488.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GIFT UNSPEAKABLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 25TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 Cor. ix. 15.

PAUL had spoken of the liberality of the Corinthian believers, and he had endeavoured to stir them up to a prudent preparation for displaying it. "Now, therefore," said he, "perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have." He closes his exhortation by this remarkable sentence: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"; intending no doubt thereby to give expression to his own hearty thankfulness, and also to deliver a master stroke of argument for Christian liberality. Nothing can so excite God's people to give to him as the remembrance of what God has given to them "Freely ye have received, freely give," is our Lord's own argument. Gospel graces are best stimulated by gospel motives. It is wrong to appeal to believers by reasons drawn from the law of works, for they are not under it; children are to be ruled as children, not as oxen. Appeal should be made to renewed hearts by arguments distilled from the law of love under which they live: seeing God has loved them with an infinite love, this love has become the most mighty of forces within them:—"The love of Christ constraineth us." Nothing can move a man to complete consecration to God like the fact that he so loved us that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The gospel is founded upon giving, and its spirit is giving. Buying and selling are unknown in spiritual things, unless we buy without money and without price. Payment is for the law; under the gospel everything is a gift. God gives us Jesus, gives us eternal life, gives us grace and glory, gives us everything, in fact; and then moved by love to him we give ourselves back to him and to his people. As it is the glory of the sun that he gives light and heat to our world, so is it God's glory that he gives mercy and peace to the sons of men; and, moreover, as the sun is the author of reflected heat, and is all the more valued because his beams can be reflected, so is God glorified by that part of his goodness which we are able to impart to others. God is glorified in the thanksgiving which is excited by the gifts of his people to the poor, as well as by their personal thanksgivings for his own gift. He gives to us, and we

thank him; we give to others, and they thank God for the kindness which he has inspired in us. Thus a round of thanksgiving to God is created by the spirit of giving, which first of all displayed itself in the unspeakable gift of God. We are as cups filled at the spring, and from us the thirsty drink and praise the fountain.

Paul had been boasting of the liberality of the Corinthians, and he somewhat feared that by their delay he might be made ashamed; he seemed almost alarmed lest he had said too much about their gifts. He could speak upon that subject and say all that should be said, but he felt that he could not describe the liberality of God. The gifts of the Corinthians were such as he could speak of, but when he thought of what God had given he could only cry, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." You can readily put down in black and white, and count up, the largest contributions of the most self-sacrificing believers, but you cannot estimate the gift of God. You cannot estimate the value of God's own dear Son: you could certainly give no expression to any estimate you had formed if it were in the least degree worthy of the subject. The love which is seen in Jesus is inconceivable, infinite, unspeakable.

During this meditation I desire to aid you as the Holy Spirit shall aid me, for in my case the power to speak of this unspeakable gift must itself be a gift. I trust it shall be given me in the selfsame hour what I shall speak. We will first consider that *Christ Jesus is the gift unspeakable*; but we are not going to be silent because of this, for our second head is, *Christ Jesus is a gift to be very much spoken of.* The gift unspeakable is to be for ever spoken of by way of gratitude—"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

I. First, then, the eternal Son of God given of God unto men, CHRIST JESUS, IS THE GIFT UNSPEAKABLE, and he is so in many ways.

To begin with: *no man can doctrinally lay down the whole meaning of the gift of Christ to men.* The church has produced thoughtful scholars whom it has called "divines," and described as "eminent theologians": from these teachers we have no doubt received much help in the exposition of the Word; and yet if we put them all together they have never been able to unfold to us the entire meaning of the gift of the Son of God to men. The devout and studious have themselves cried out, "O the depths," but they have not pretended to fathom this abyss of mystery. Certain teachers have fallen far short of the mark, and have done great mischief by their low estimate of the unspeakable gift. What they have said may have been true, but their sin has been one of omission—omission where none should have been possible. They have said far too little about Christ, and have seemed to be afraid of extolling him too highly. In the estimation of such persons the gift of the Saviour has been simply a display of God's good will to the race, and nothing more: Jesus was a divine philanthropist and nought beside, according to their gospel. This is to use other balances than those of the sanctuary, and to give short weight to the great Householder. It is true that God commended his love to man by the death of his Son, and none can say too much upon this point; but there is far more in the gift of Christ than mere good will. We are glad that these men admit the divine benevolence, but we wish they could see more than that: for that view of our Lord which sees in him only a display of

benevolence to men does but dimly discern his character and value. Certainly he is "unspeakable" by those who only think of him after this fashion.

Others have spoken of Christ as a wonderful declaration of God's opposition to moral evil. The death of Christ has been received by them as a vague expression of divine displeasure against sin, of course not dissociating it from his benevolence towards men. Herein is truth also, for how shall we ever see the purity of God more fully vindicated than in the exhibition of sin's result in the mortal agony and death throes of our divine Lord? Yet, if this be all that any man has to say, he has failed to comprehend the gift of God, for the great Father has done far more for men by the gift of his Son than merely to intimate the kindness of his nature and the results of moral evil. We admit that in the death of his Son the Lord has declared his love to man, and his hatred of sin, but he has done infinitely more: the cross is not only a school but a hospital: the crucifixion not only reveals man's evil, but provides a remedy for it; Christ is not merely a lesson, but a gift—a gift unspeakable.

Some of our brethren dwell very much, perhaps none too much, upon the general aspect of Christ's death towards all mankind. It is a grand fact that the human race is spared because Jesus died; and that it is not only reprieved, but uplifted from degradation and put in a position to hear messages of mercy, which if believed will bring salvation. The Lord Jesus is described in Scripture as "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe"; his mission is glad tidings both to Israel and to all people; all Adam's seed are affected by his death. They do well who freely proclaim the common salvation; they cannot dwell too much upon its freeness, though I would have them not overlook its fulness and sovereignty. We like well to hear of the effect of the incarnation and the atonement upon the entire human family as placing it under a mediator, but we would also hear of the special application of redemption and its actual results. No one can say too much of the great redemption, the matchless propitiation; yea, though one should speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, concerning Jesus Christ in his relation to the human family, he need not fear that he would magnify the Lord too loftily. The sinner's Friend, the mighty Saviour, the gracious Pardoner cannot be too much spoken of, for under that aspect he is unspeakable.

We delight in addition to this to speak of Christ's special relationship to his own people, and we lay a great emphasis upon the fact of his substitution in their behalf. We rejoice to speak of his bearing the sin of many, his being numbered with the transgressors, his being made sin for us though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Our heart expands, our eyes o'erflow, whenever we dilate upon his suretiship and consequent substitution. His wondrous condescending love in taking our place, his standing in the sinner's stead that we might stand in his place and be accepted in the Beloved—this carries our heart away, and we never weary of the theme. O divine doctrine! Full of consolation! Teeming with highest hopes! Fain would we preach for ever the sublime truth of the substitution of our Lord for us! Yet if this were our one theme we should still fail to express the unspeakable. We are apt to think that when we have laid

down this doctrine clearly and distinctly, and have admitted all that others have well said, that we have believed and taught all that can be known concerning the gift of Jesus Christ to men: but, beloved, I am persuaded that it is not so. Beside the purpose of declaring benevolence and censuring sin, of uplifting the race and of effectually saving the chosen, there is more yet to be subserved by the incarnation and atonement. The purposes of God are manifold, and a wheel is ever within a wheel with him. I will not at this time even try to speak doctrinally beyond what I have already attempted, for we must stop somewhere, and I will pause here, at the truth of his vicarious suffering: the gift is unspeakable when we have spoken our very best, and so let this suffice. I bid you peer over the brink upon which I would set you. Look down into this abyss of love. Be you sure of this, that this depth is unfathomable. It is idle to attempt a definition of infinity, and therefore vain to hope to declare how wide, how high, how deep, how broad, is the wondrous gift of God to the sons of men. Theology can speak on many themes, and she hath much to say on this, but her voice fails to speak the whole. From the pulpit when occupied by a gracious man the confession freely comes, that the heralds of the cross are not able to tell out all that is hidden in Christ Jesus.

The gift is unspeakable for another reason: *no man can ever set forth the manner of this gift.* The way and method of the giving are unknown, perhaps unknowable, and hence unspeakable. Just think awhile. Do you understand, and could you possibly explain, the manner of the Father's giving the Only-Begotten to us? For Jesus Christ is not only the Father's Son, but he is God himself, one with God: the gift of the Son is virtually God's giving himself to men. There can be no separation between God the Son and God the Father, for, saith Christ, "I and my Father are one." "Believe me," saith he, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Do you understand this? Is it not unspeakable? Do not, therefore, be drawing hard and fast lines, and speaking of Christ as suffering, and of the Father as scarcely participating in the sacrifice, for this may grow into grievous error. It has been laid down by divines that God is impassable, and not capable of any form of suffering. It may be so, but I fail to see scriptural authority for the statement. That God can do what he pleases I do believe, and therefore he can suffer too if so he wills. To me a God who has no feelings is further off from me a great deal than my Father who is in heaven, who can be grieved by my sin, and can feel for my sorrow. It may be true that Scripture only speaks after the manner of men, but then it is as a man that I understand it; and it does seem to me to reveal not only a living God, but a feeling God. Is God glorified by being petrified? Read Paul's words to the Ephesian elders when he speaks of "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28). The blood of God—is not that a mistake? Certainly not, since inspiration thus speaks. Sometimes expressions which are mistakes in logic may be more accurate descriptions than the best arranged sentences. The expression which looks to be a contradiction may better express the truth than that which is verbally accurate. Scripture is infallible, and yet it uses none of the red tape of systematic theology. We swim in mysteries when we speak

Father and the Son. How, then, God could give the Son to die,
ng one with himself—shall any man explain it? Or, if he could
n the mystery, can he tell us what it cost the Father to give his
Can a mother tell us how it pains her heart to part with her
Can any father tell us the anguish of losing his only begotten?
must it be to give up your well-beloved son to be despised and
pon, maltreated and murdered! No; you do not know what it is,
ıerefore you cannot tell what it is! You that have been bereaved
ır dearest, you know the pang which tears the heart, but you cannot
s your loss to others: your grief is inexpressible. Who shall tell
the Father felt when he did as it were cast the glory of the Well-
d to the dogs, by sending him among the wicked husbandmen,
aid, "This is the heir, let us kill him"? Who shall tell what the
al felt when the brightness of his glory, the express image of his
ı, was bound like a felon, and accused like a criminal, mocked as
postor, and scourged as a transgressor, rejected as vile, and slain as
y of death? To see his Well-beloved hung up like a thief, and
to bear infinite agony—what thought the Father of this? True,
eased Jehovah to bruise him: he hath put him to grief," but not
ıt great self-denial on the part of the great Father. All the agony
raham when he unsheathed the knife to slay his son was but a faint
f what it cost the Father when he gave the Only-Begotten that he
die for us.

urther sense of the unspeakableness of this gift will come over you
attempt to measure our Lord's sufferings when he was made sin
. None can declare the greatness of his sacrifice. Think of the
of Christ throughout all ages at the right hand of God, and re-
er that all this was laid aside. What a descent from heaven's
ty to Bethlehem's manger; from the throne of Jehovah to the
of Mary! Think of the perfect nature of Christ's humanity, and
ısequent rest in God, and yet he stooped out of his spirit's peace
lure the contradiction of sinners against himself. Think of his
e perfections and boundless deservings, and of the shameful con-
that was poured upon him. The cruel asp of ingratitude stung
ınd the serpent of malice bit him: yet all the while was he Lord
. Every step of his way of love is full of wonders. His becoming
ith us according to the flesh is a great marvel. Think, if you can,
ıat it must mean that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among
Incarnation is but the first step, but of that first descent of love
hall declare the mystery? But this was merely the beginning: he
ıe a man that he might go further and become man's substitute.
if you can, to conceive of incarnate God as having sin imputed to
transgression laid upon him. Why, the very idea must have been
r to his perfect spirit. Conceive of justice with its iron rod
ıng and pounding the innocent Son of God with griefs vicarious,
for us!

"Much we talk of Jesu's love,
But how little's understood!
Of his sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense."

Thine unknown sufferings," says the Greek Liturgy, and unknown

they must for ever be. O Jesus, what a price it was that thou didst pay! What griefs they were to which thou didst bow thyself till thou wast covered with a bloody sweat! O Lord Jesus, the brightest spirit before thy throne who has dwelt with thee ever since thine ascension cannot tell us what thou didst endure. Thy groans are a gift unspeakable. How it was that he died who is the resurrection and the life? and how it was he bore sin, even he who is none other than eternal perfection? None of us can speak here, for he is the gift unspeakable.

I ask you to follow me in another line of thought, while I still talk upon the unspeakable. *None can describe the boons which have come to us through the gift of Christ.* Think of what we have been delivered from: think awhile of what you were by nature, and what you would have continued to have been had not grace interposed, and what you would have become if Jesus had not been given to save the lost. Ah, my brothers and sisters, we are fallen already, but the full results of the fall are not seen on earth. The ripe result of sin is gathered in the dark region where castaways dwell for ever, finally banished from hope; where ring of Sabbath bell is never heard, for they rest not day nor night; where voice of mercy can never enter, for this doleful knell tolls through that dreary land with awful tone, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." And you and I might have been there now, and shall be there yet, if Jesus Christ be not ours. Yea, and the brightest saints in heaven, upon whom the eternal light has risen never to set, would have been now in the outer darkness, weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth, if it had not been for this unspeakable gift. The distance between the depth unfathomable of deserved woe and the height unutterable of infinite grace and glory an angel's wing cannot measure; hence it will always be impossible to tell the height and depth of this unspeakable gift.

But now think for awhile what are the boons which we enjoy at this hour. There is, first of all, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. We are washed, washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness of the Son of God, adopted into the family of the Eternal, and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." There comes to us by way of adoption all the provision, nurture, education, and paternal love which the heavenly Father gives to all the children of his family. Brethren, I have not time to mention one by one all the covenant blessings. All things are in the covenant, whether things present, or things to come, or life, or death, all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's; and all these things come to us through Christ. God spared not his own Son, and in giving him to us he hath also freely given us all things. Now, who is he that can speak of such a theme as this, for if he do but dwell upon the blessings which flow to us from Jesus Christ he must be lost in wonder? Other gifts may amaze us, but this utterly overwhelms us. If the streams be fathomless, who shall find a plummet wherewith to measure the fountain? I preached last Sabbath night to a great congregation that had come for many miles, and being faint and thirsty, they emptied many buckets of water which were set for them: their thirst consumed a great quantity, yet an observer might soon have known how much they drank; but who shall tell what the earth drinks in

during a single thunder-shower? Who shall measure the floods which roll down the great rivers? Who shall compute the volume of the sea? Yet all these are finite, and may be reckoned up in order: our Lord Jesus Christ is infinite. Of man's gifts to man we may readily make estimate, but when you come to the gift of Christ arithmetic is baffled, and even imagination is outstripped. Other themes we may hope to compass by study and careful speech, but before this we are dumb with astonishment. Boundless grace, unutterable mercy, divine love—these are heavenly things, and tongues of clay can never fully declare them.

Furthermore, the gift of God must always be unspeakable because *when it is best realized the effect it produces upon the emotions is so great that speech fails.* I would not give much for the man who can at all times fluently talk about the love of God in Christ Jesus. When he feels most his obligations his heart will check his lips! Utterance belongs not to the deepest emotion. Only believe thou in thy heart that God has given Christ to thee, and all that comes with him, and thou wilt rise from thy bended knees weeping for joy. A sense of sin forgiven through the atoning sacrifice will master thee! When Jesus bares his heart before thee, canst thou speak then? I will defy thee to play the orator when love holds thee beneath its spell. Thou wilt have a longing to tell the story, but an incapacity to fulfil thy desire. Some feelings are too big for expression. The griefs that prattle are but small: great griefs are silent. Mercies which make us talk are common, and no longer wondered at; but those which come with an unveiled divinity about them are like Moses, too bright to look upon. A sense of covenant love binds a man to his place and makes him sit down like David before the Lord, and bow his head and cry, "Whence is this to me? Is this according to the manner of man, O Lord God?" Yes, the gift must be unspeakable, because the more it is appreciated the more are we silenced: the deeper our sense of its value the less is our power to impart it to others. Power to speak of the love of Christ is not always to be taken as an evidence of true religion, nor is its absence a matter for alarm. I remember one dear lover of Christ who wished to join a certain church, but her testimony of experience was very slender; indeed, she said too little to satisfy the brethren who came to speak with her, and they told her so; when, bursting through all bonds she cried out, "I cannot speak for him, but I could die for him." Many are in a like plight, and in a measure all true souls lie under the like difficulty. We could more easily die for Christ than hope to tell out fully our sense of his dear love. He is a gift unspeakable. Heaven cannot match him; how can earth describe him?

When this gift is best expressed, even when the Spirit of God helps men to speak upon it, they yet feel it to be unspeakable. When men sing like poets, or write like apostles, they own that the wing of their thought cannot soar to the full height of this grand mystery: they have not even expressed what they have felt, and they have not felt what they inwardly know they ought to have felt in connection with so divine a theme.

He who before his fellow men has given the most vivid description of the love of God in Christ Jesus is the very man who best knows that it is inexpressible. You shall not be able to soar amongst the mysteries

and bask in the eternal light of Jehovah's face, and then come back from thence and say, "I can declare it all to you." No, Paul said that "he heard things which it were not lawful for a man to utter." Joys revealed in the innermost place of holy fellowship are not to be commonly published: we should mar them in the attempt at their utterance. You can often feel what you cannot possibly describe to those who most eagerly listen to you. Often my preaching of the love of Christ is to my own mind, when I have done, as sad a failure as if I had gilded gold or enamelled the lily. I was one day in the ruins of Nero's palace, and he who guided us there had a series of rods fitted in telescopic manner into one another. On the top of these was a candle, and he held it high up to let us read the inscriptions on the arch of the vault overhead. We can do that with mortal things, and so make men see them, but when we have done our best to describe the love of Christ we have felt as though we had held aloft those silly rods with a farthing candle upon them to show the sun at noon. God is very gracious to let his dear Son be seen at all through such poor narrow windows as we are. Poor, poor work is our best preaching concerning the adorable Lord Jesus. But this is one thing we can say with respect to him from our very hearts, that he has filled us to the full and satisfied us. They said of Alexander that he had an ambition so vast that if his body had been as large as his soul he would have stood with one foot on the sea and the other on the shore, and would have grasped the east with his right hand and the west with his left. If our souls were thus boundless in desire Christ's love could fill them. Nothing else contents a man; but with Jesus we are satisfied. Though a man were, like Solomon, to get to himself all the wisdom and the riches of the world, "Vanity of vanities" would be his verdict; but he who wins Christ, and has Christ's love shed abroad in his heart, has no vacant corner in his heart, no vacuum within his soul: Christ has filled him to running over. We can say, "filled with all the fulness of God," but as to containing the fulness of God, he that hath most of it knows how impossible a thing it is. You may frame the fairest picture that ever man painted, but you cannot frame the Alps; though his daring pencil should cover many a yard, you may hang up the master's canvas upon your walls, but when you stand upon the mountain's brow, and look o'er hill and vale, and sea and shore, you dream not of frames and picture-galleries, but leave the panorama in its own setting, for it cannot be encompassed by human invention. You may take the population of a city, a kingdom, or if needs be of the world, and make a census thereof, and set down the millions; but who shall take a census of the birds of heaven, the insects which swarm the air, the fish which teem the sea, the stars which stud the sky, and the sands which bound the main? All these things are countable by some sort of reckoning, but the love of Christ is infinite. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Thus have we dealt with the unspeakable, and we now feel even more truly than when we began that language fails us.

II. Let me have all your hearts for a few minutes while I now dwell on the other truth, that CHRIST IS A GIFT OF GOD TO BE VERY MUCH SPOKEN OF. To be spoken of, first, *by thanks to God*. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Brethren, we do not thank God as

we ought for anything: we are not half as thankful as we ought to be. Luther was wont to tell a story of two cardinals who were riding to the council of Constance. One of them stopped because he saw a shepherd sitting down in the meadow weeping. Dismounting, he tried to comfort him, and asked him why he wept. The poor man was slow to answer, but being pressed he said, "Looking upon this toad I wept because I have never thanked God as I ought for making me a man possessed of reason, and of excellent form, and not a loathsome toad." The cardinal fainted as he saw the piety of the peasant, and as he went away he exclaimed, "O St. Augustine! how truly didst thou say the unlearned rise and take heaven by force, and we with all our learning rise not above flesh and blood." Might not some of us faint under a like sense of ingratitude? Did you ever bless God for your creation, your reason, your continued life? I have known what it is to thank God with all my heart for being able to move my limbs and turn in bed. Perhaps you have always enjoyed good health: do you thank him for that? To be out of the hospital, to be out of the lunatic asylum, to be out of prison, to be out of hell,—do we ever glorify God for these things? As for the unspeakable gift of Christ, who among us has ever worthily blessed the Lord on this account? Brethren, if we have Jesus to be our salvation, when ought we to thank God for him? Why, every morning when we wake. How long should we continue to praise God on this account? Till we go to sleep again. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same his name is to be extolled. Let us praise God till sleep steeps our senses in a sweet forgetfulness. It is even pleasant to go on singing unto the Lord in the visions of our bed, as if the chords of grateful emotion vibrated after the hand of thought had ceased to play on them. It is good when even this wayward fancy of our dreams wanders towards the Well-Beloved, never rambling outside of holy ground. Let even the fairies of our night-dream sing hymns to Jesus, and the cowslip bells of dream-land harbour imaginings of the fair plant of renown. Oh, to get into such a state that we shall be still praising him; praising, and praising, and praising, and never ceasing. When we become low in spirit, it will be a sad reflection if we have to own that in fairer weather we forgot our beloved. Let us give double praise while we can. While we are in good spirits and happy in the Lord let us pour forth our hymns. Tamerlane said to the mighty Bajazet, when he had overcome him in battle and taken him for a prisoner, "Didst thou ever give God thanks for making thee so great an emperor?" Bajazet confessed that he had never thought of that. "Then," said Tamerlane, "it is no wonder that so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery." Conscience will taunt us when we are sorrowful by saying, "You did not praise God when you were in health; and now you are ill and hoarse, and cannot lift up your voice; you did not praise him for his unspeakable gift when you knew you had it; and now you are full of doubts about it, and Satan has you upon the hip, you well deserve all the sorrow that your mind shall feel." Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us praise the Lord; let us vow unto ourselves to-day that, his grace helping us, we will praise him, praise him, praise him, and praise him again, and again, and again, and again, as long as we have any being, for his

unspeakable gift. We shall never get to the end of this work; the unspeakable gift is for ever telling, and telling, yet never shall it all be told. Help us, all that know his salvation! Help us, angels! Help us, all ye coming ages! Help us, all ye stars of light! but still the thing shall be unspeakable even to the end.

Next, *let us show our gratitude to God in deeds of praise.* "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." If we cannot speak it, let us try if we cannot *do* something that will show forth the praise of God. Actions speak more loudly than words. If our words have failed, let us try actions. And the first thing to do is to give yourself away to your Lord. Come, beloved, if God has given you Jesus Christ, give him yourself. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, wherefore present your bodies as living sacrifices. Don't talk about it, but really do it: live for him who died for you. Then, in consequence of having already given yourself, give of your substance to God, and give freely. Give not the lame and the blind, but look ye out the best of the flock. Let this be a great joy to you; not the payment of a tax, but the tribute of delighted love. Give to God cheerfully, for he loveth a cheerful giver. Buy him the sweet cane with money, and fill him with the fat of your sacrifices. Nothing can be too good or great for our ever blessed Lord. Our loving Master will accept at our hands the alabaster box when we break it joyfully for his dear sake. Let deeds of holy consecration mark the whole of our lives, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, when they are not brought as a price to purchase merit, but as a love-token and tribute to his grace. Think of this exhortation, and carry it out abundantly: it shall turn to your temporal and eternal enrichment.

I am sure, however, that deeds of patience are among the thanks which best speak out our gratitude to God. Did it ever strike you that patience is a noble sort of psalmody? Perhaps you will see this truth if I tell you an anecdote. In the old church stories we read of one called Didymus, a famous preacher, who brought many souls to Christ; but he was blind, and Didymus grieved greatly over the loss of his sight. Those who heard him perceived that his blindness gave a mournful tinge to his discourses. A certain godly man named Alexander went to him and spoke to him in private after this fashion: "Didymus," said he, "does not thy blindness cause thee great sorrow?" "Brother Alexander," said he, "it is my constant grief that I have lost the light. I can scarcely endure my existence, because I am always in the dark." Then Alexander said to him, "Thou art doing a work which an angel might envy thee, and thou hast the honour of an apostle in speaking for Jesus Christ, and wilt thou fret because thou hast lost that which rats and mice and brute beasts have in common with men?" This was not a very tender thing to say, but it strengthened Didymus patiently to endure his trial and to bless God for his unspeakable gift. What is there, after all, that we have

ot, if we have Christ? If you have lost everything but Christ, yet
: you have Christ left you what have you lost? Why fret for
ins when God gives pearls? Why grieve over the loss of a few
ence when God has heaped upon us talents of gold? Submit in
racious joy to the divine will, and let your patience say, "I will thank
iod, I will thank God still for his unspeakable gift."

Now, dear friends, there is one way in which I want you to thank
iod and show your gratitude for Christ, and that is *by always holding
thankful creed.* Believe nothing which would rob God of thanks, or
hrist of glory. I set great store by a sound creed in these evil days
hen the gospel is but little valued by many. Hold a creed of which
he top and bottom is this, "Grace, grace, grace; salvation all of
race." Whenever you hear a preacher, no matter who he may be,
naking out that salvation is not completely of the grace of God, just
ay in your hearts, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Do
ot go an inch away from that standpoint. Salvation is altogether a
ift: it is not of works, it is not of merit; it is of grace, and grace alone.
Turn away from the man who stutters when he says "grace"; he will
ever feed your soul.

Hold a theology which magnifies Christ, a divinity which teaches
hat Christ is God's unspeakable gift. When a man gets cutting down
in, paring down depravity, and making little of future punishment, let
im no longer preach to you. Some modern divines whittle away the
gospel to the small end of nothing. They make our divine Lord to be a
ort of blessed nobody; they bring down salvation to mere salvability,
nake certainties into probabilities, and treat verities as mere opinions.
When you see a preacher making the gospel small by degrees and
niserably less, till there is not enough of it left to make soup for a sick
grasshopper, get you gone. Such diminution and adulteration will not
do for me: my heart cries, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable
gift." These gentlemen, you know, are highly cultivated and can tell us
all about it: they have a theology which is suited to their educated
reason: to them grace can be weighed in scales and atonement in
balances; unless indeed both be as the drop of a bucket, not worthy
of being mentioned at all. Every grand truth with them is dwarfed and
dwindled down into utter insignificance. The thought of the nineteenth
century makes men the heirs of apes, while it declares their souls to be
mortal, and their sins to be trifles. Our Bibles are made to be mere
human records, and our hopes are treated as childish dreams. These pigmy
thinkers shorten all things to their pigmy scale. As for me, I believe in
the colossal: a need deep as hell and grace as high as heaven. I believe
in a pit that is bottomless, and in mercy above the heavens. I believe
in an infinite God and an infinite atonement, infinite love and infinite
mercy, an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, of which

the substance and the seal is an infinite Christ. Christ is all; Christ is unspeakable, the unspeakable gift of God. Hold to that, or you will not thank God as you should.

Nor rest in a thoroughly sound creed, but *try to bring others to accept God's unspeakable gift.* You know how the birds stir up each other to sing. One bird in a cage will excite its fellow, who looks at him and seems to say, "You shall not outstrip me: I will sing with you." Then another joins the strain, saying, "I will sing with you," till all the little minstrels quiver with an ecstasy of song, and form a choir of emulating songsters. Hark how the early morning of the spring is rendered musical by the full orchestra of birds! One songster begins the tune, and the rest hasten to swell the music! Let us be like these blessed birds. Let us try to lead our families to praise the Lord. Bless the Lord till you set the fashion, and others bless him with you. Seek out those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, and tell them "the old, old story of Jesus and his love." Thus, if you cannot sing more yourself, nor praise God more yourself, you will have increased his praise by bringing in others to sing with you. See you to this, and let this be henceforth the motto of your lives. Write it over your doors; emblazon it on the walls of your chambers; let it hang over your bed-head by night, "THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT." O Holy Spirit, write this line of gratitude upon the tablets of our hearts. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans v. and 2 Corinthians ix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—438, 427, 250.

etropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TO-DAY! TO-DAY! TO-DAY!

A Sermon

LIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1ST, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."—Psalm xcv. 7, 8.

Psalm is a burst of praise. It resounds with the joyful noise of thanksgiving unto Jehovah, and yet ere it closes you hear the tones of exhortation to men to hearken to the voice of their God. hat it should be true, but true it is, that the Canaanite still dwells midst of Israel. In every gathering of the faithful there is an ure of those who know not the ways of God. When Israel came Egypt a mixed multitude came forth with the people of God; that multitude did them great damage, and often brought them under in, and consequent sorrow, but they were always there; and they ays here too, in the church and around it, dishonouring us by vil behaviour. Not only in the great congregations, but even in atherings of believers, we meet with the unworthy ones; scarcely elve met together without a Judas in the midst of them. Thus it to pass that in our loudest praises there is always a measure of l, and when we have lauded the Most High with our best jahs, we shall be called upon to listen in humble silence to his g voice, addressed to the unbelieving and disobedient among us. haracters are here this morning, and it is well for us to know the t is well for us to examine ourselves, whether we belong to this and whether the words before us may not be addressed to our- —"If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." But ing us to have hearkened to the Lord ourselves, and to have found like a river in consequence, it is well for us to think of those who ing side by side with us who are living in unbelief, that we may od the more for distinguishing grace manifested to ourselves, and e may offer our earnest prayers for them all through the service od may bring them to his feet, and save them by his grace. In rit of hearty love to men's souls I shall try to preach, and in that I beg of you to hear the word to-day. If saints are thus moved sinners, and to pray for them, the Holy Spirit will bless the word, will be quick and powerful to search out the thoughts of men's and arouse them from their indifference to the voice of God. He

is a happy minister who while he preaches is surrounded by a praying people. Joshua in the plain is sure of the victory while Moses pleads upon the mount with God. Borne up by your supplications, I advance to an earnest conflict with the hard hearts of the unsaved.

Yet the sermon will not be altogether and only for the unbelieving; for, alas, even in God's people there is a measure of unbelief and deafness of ear. Even God's children do not hear their Father's voice so readily as they should. We are sometimes so taken up with other things that God speaks again and again, and we do not regard him. The still small voice of his love is too apt to be altogether unheeded while the thunders of this world's traffic fill our ears. Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be *in any of you* an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Lest this should be the case let each of us take home to himself so much of what shall be spoken as may fairly be applicable to himself, and let us all hear God saying to us, even to us, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation."

Let us come at once to the text. The simple plan of our speaking this morning shall at once be laid before you. We have here, first, *a time specified*—the Holy Ghost saith "to-day"; secondly, *a voice to be regarded*—"If ye will hear his voice"; and then, thirdly, *an evil to be dreaded*, against which we are warned—"harden not your heart." There is a sad tendency in man to harden his heart even when God speaks, therefore saith the Holy Ghost to us, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation."

I. First, then, THE TIME SPECIFIED—"To-day if ye will hear his voice." This is the uniform time and tense of the Holy Ghost's exhortations. He saith nothing about to-morrow, except to forbid our boasting of it, since we know not what a day shall bring forth. All his instructions are set to the time and tune of "To-day, to-day, to-day." He speaks of pressing and immediate necessities requiring to be supplied "to-day," and of urgent duties which must be fulfilled "to-day." He says, "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord." "I command thee this thing to-day." "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." Therefore, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

"To-day" is *a time of obligation*. Every man is under a present necessity as a subject of God to obey his Lord to-day, and having rebelled against his God, every sinner is under law to repent of sin to-day. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is the cry of Scripture to every one who has sinned against the Most High. (Acts iii. 19.) What if I should repent to-morrow, yet it will be a sin to remain impenitent to-day. What if I should believe in Christ next year, yet will it be a heinous offence to have been an unbeliever this year. I have no more right to continue to disobey than I ever had to disobey at all. When the law has been broken it is still binding, and every fresh offence against it is reckoned to our charge. We are bound to confess and forsake sin now, and delay increases our sin. I met with a striking sentence in the works of William Mason which is well worthy to be written among your memoranda: "Every day of delay leaves a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in." What if this day shall be the last I live; shall it be spent in refusing to

hear the word of my Maker? Shall my last breath be spent in rejecting my Saviour? God forbid! I see that I am bound as his creature to obey him, and as his sinful creature to seek pardon of him; help me, therefore, blessed Spirit, to attend to these things this day without delay.

Remember, also, that to-day is *a time of opportunity*. There is this day set before us an open door of approach to God. This is a very favoured day, for it is the Lord's day, the day of rest, consecrated to works of grace. To-day our Lord Jesus rose and left the dead that he might declare the justification of his people. This is a day of good tidings, therefore, beloved, I pray you seize the golden moments. On what better day can you seek the Lord than on that day which he has hedged about and set apart that you might spend it in his fear? Is it not our Sabbath? No day can be more fit for ceasing from your own works that you may rest in the work of Christ. Is it not the first day of the week? This day creating work began, why should not the new creation begin in you at this good hour? To-day the fiat of the Lord went forth, and there was light. O for that fiat to be heard within your souls that you might have light! It is a day of grace to-day, a day of gospel preaching, a day of an open Bible, a day of promises, a day in which the Spirit of God comes to work with men, a day in which Jesus Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you, a day in which the mercy-seat is approachable, a day in which justice is God's strange work, but in which mercy is his joyful occupation. These are days which kings and prophets waited for, and saw not—blessed days, when mercy keeps open house for all hungry souls, and when whosoever will may come, and him that cometh shall in no wise be cast out. You cannot have a better time for coming to Christ in than the season prescribed in the text—namely, "to-day."

With some of you it is a time of choice opportunity, for you are in good health, and possess the powers of clear connected thought. How much better is such a day than the gloomy period when you will lie sick and near to death! That poor brain will be distracted with a thousand cares and fears, how will you then be able to grasp the solemn truths of revelation for the first time? It is ill to be setting your house in order at the moment you are leaving it. You may have enough to do even to draw your breath, while those who watch you will need to wipe the clammy sweat from your brow: it will be a poor time for these weighty matters then. It may be you will be low, or faint, or delirious, and it will be hard to be without God then. Many have said to me when I have seen them dying, "If I had a Christ to find now what should I do?" Do avail yourselves, dear hearers, of the time when your reason is yet upon its hinges, and the windows of your minds can yet admit the light. Seek ye the Lord while yet your health is continued to you. The day of strength should not be wasted, nor should our youth be thrown away, but while vigour lasts we should press into the kingdom. To-day then listen, for to-day is an opportune time.

Remember, also, that you are sitting in the place where God has saved thousands of souls; and you are listening to one who, though in himself utterly unworthy, God has used for bringing many to himself. Perhaps you have come from some distant part of the country where the preaching has not been a power to your soul; the very change and novelty of

the minister's voice may be helpful to you, and you may this day be more inclined to attend to the gospel than you have been on other occasions; it is therefore a time of opportunity. Hoist sail while the wind blows. Men say, "Make hay while the sun shines," and I say the same to you. While the rain of grace is falling set your souls under the sacred shower. He who goes into a battle and wishes to be wounded will soon meet with a wound; and he who wishes the truth of God to lay him low will not be long untouched by it. Everything around seems to-day agreed to help the soul that will at once come to Jesus: the day, the place, the people, the preacher, all make it a time of opportunity to many of you.

Remember how Paul tells us plainly that it is *a time limited*. He says "Again he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day if ye will hear his voice." To-day will not last for ever; a day is but a day. When days are longest shadows fall at last and night comes on. The longest life soon wanes into the evening of old age, and old age hastens to the sunset of the tomb. It is a limited day; a day, but only a day. How very limited life is in many instances! How many are born but never reach complete manhood! How many pass away before they have fulfilled one half the allotted age of man! How many lives are extinguished as a candle is suddenly blown out. This thought ought to make us listen to the divine voice which cries—"to-day," "to-day." The thought of death has often brought men to decision. They tell us in the old histories that Peter Waldo, a certain eminent merchant, had lived a thoughtless, careless life, but as he walked the streets of Lyons his friend who was apparently in good health fell dead at his side, and Waldo at once sought the Lord, believed the gospel, and preached it to others. According to certain writers he became the founder of that wonderful people the Waldensians, who maintained the truth of God through many a century when the whole earth was covered with Papal darkness.

Oh that some of you would become so conscious of your own frailty as to perceive that you are standing on the brink of everlasting woe, thus may you be moved to seek your God at once, and find your Saviour to-day. Reflections upon death have often driven men to Christ, and so have wrought life in them by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. In a book entitled "Wonders of Grace," by a Primitive Methodist minister, I met with a story which pleased me much. A young man in London who was sick with fever was attended lovingly by a young doctor who was his bosom friend. He lived in apartments. His careful friend ordered him to be moved into the darkest part of the room, because the sunlight was too much for his eyes. It was a singular providence that the bed should be pushed close against the wall, which was only a thin partition separating the apartment from the room in which lived the landlord of the house. While the sick man lay there, possibly with his mind somewhat wandering in the fever, he was astonished to hear a voice whisper in his own tongue a verse which may be translated thus—

> "To-day thou livest yet,
> To-day turn thee to God;
> For ere to-morrow comes
> Thou mayst be with the dead."

ome other words followed which he did not hear so well, but presently . a louder voice he heard the words repeated—

"To-day thou livest yet,
To-day turn thee to God;
For ere to-morrow comes
Thou mayst be with the dead."

ver and over again those same words were whispered or spoken close the spot where his ear was lying. It so impressed him that, when his ung friend the physician asked him how he was, he looked at him rnestly, and replied—

"To-day thou livest yet,
To-day turn thee to God;
For ere to-morrow comes
Thou mayst be with the dead."

he physician took his hand and said, "Your pulse is better, but if it ere not for that I should think you worse, for you are evidently raving." o this he received no answer but a repetition of the lines. He could et nothing out of his patient but that verse, spoken with an awe-struck ok and thrilling voice. The young physician went home thoughtful, and hen he came next time he found his friend much better, sitting up in ed, reading the Scriptures. The two sought and found the Saviour, for ose warning words had drawn them across the boundary line, and made hem decide for God and for his Christ. How came the lines to have hus sounded in the sick man's ears? Was it a dream? Did an angel ronounce the warning? No; it was a little boy who had failed to peat his lesson to his father, and had been made to stand in the corner, ith his face to the wall, till he knew the lines. He was saying his task ver and over and over to himself, in order to fix it on his memory, and od was using his voice through the partition to bring a heart to him-elf. How various are the methods of mercy! Dear hearer, there may e something quite as odd, and yet as ordinary, about your being here is morning: some simple circumstance may have stranded you on these ores, where love waits to bless you. You are not in the place where ou usually attend; perhaps you thought it too far to go on such a wet ay, and you have turned in to worship nearer home; may God overrule for your eternal good. May the Lord impress you with the fact that the ay of grace is limited. Mark well the truth that to-day is the only time hat any man has, and, therefore, he had need be up and doing.

"Our time is all to-day, to-day,
The same, though changed; and while it flies,
With still small voice the moments say,
'To-day, to-day, be wise, be wise!'"

A word, however, of encouragement before we leave this point: it is *time of promise*, for when God saith to a man, Come to me at such a me, he by that very word makes an engagement to meet him. One ked me this morning, "When can I call upon you?" I said, "At ten clock next Tuesday." Of course I shall then be ready to receive him nothing unforeseen prevents. I should not have made the appoint-ent for him to come if I had meant to refuse him when he comes; and hen God saith, "Hear my voice to-day," he means that he will meet you d speak with you to-day. David said to Solomon, "If thou seek him,

he will be found of thee." This is true of thee, dear hearer, if thou wilt seek him to-day. He has made no appointment with thee to meet with thee to-morrow, but he has engaged to speak with thee to-day, if thou wilt hear his voice. Never shall one wait and say, like young Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," without God's speaking in words of love ere long. There is so much to encourage in the text, that I would fain hope and pray that many of my dear hearers who have never sought the Lord will at this moment cry, "The time past shall suffice me to have wrought the will of the flesh, and now to-day let others do as they will, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord and seek his face."

II. Secondly, let us think of THE VOICE TO BE REGARDED. "To day if ye will hear *his* voice." Place the emphasis upon the word HIS. Reading the psalm, as we have done, we could not help noticing that its first verses are the voice of the church of God: "O come, let *us* sing unto the Lord: let *us* make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let *us* come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." Throughout the first seven verses we have the voice of God's people pleading with all that are mingled with them to bow in joyful, humble, believing worship before the Most High; shall not these pleadings influence our minds? Surely attention should be paid to the voices of godly men and women. The entreaties of pious parents, teachers, relatives, and friends, ought not to fall to the ground. When the Bride saith "Come," her voice is worthy of your attention, especially when you remember that the Spirit speaks in her. We, who serve God, implore you to have regard to our entreaties. When we unselfishly love you as we love our own souls, and long for your salvation, you ought to regard our earnestness. When you know that our hearts break at the thought of your being lost, and that we would give our eyes if we might but give eyes to you wherewith you should see Jesus, there ought to be some power about our love, and you should give earnest heed to our entreaties. I thank God there often is a force in the love of believers to their friends; but if in our case there is none, if you think our appeals too insignificant, yet I beseech you listen to the voice of God, for surely his voice may not be slighted: to-day hear ye his voice, for indeed the gospel is *his* voice. Is not the Bible his book? Are not the truths which we preach truths which he has revealed? Is not the plan of salvation of *his* own ordaining? Is not Christ the unspeakable gift of *his* own giving? Is not pardon according to *his* promise? Therefore, though the preacher will be quite willing that you should pour contempt upon him, he implores you not to do despite to his Master. Despise not God! Reject not Christ. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

Remember that the voice of God is *the voice of authority*. God has a right to speak to you: shall the creature refuse to hear the Creator? Shall those who are nourished and fed by him turn a deaf ear to the Preserver of men? When he saith "to-day," who among us shall dare to say that he will not hearken to-day, but by-and-by? It is disobedience on the part of a child when he says to his father "I will not obey you to-day." He might as well say "I will disobey you," for that is what he means. If you had a summons from the court to attend at such an hour, would you send a message to say that it was not convenient, but you would attend

at your own pleasure? If the Queen were to command you into her presence at such an hour, I warrant that you would be there before the time rather than after it. It is an insult to superiors when we take no notice of their appointed times, but keep them waiting our will and pleasure. The Lord has a right to fix his own time for doing deeds of grace and favour. He is giving away his free mercy to undeserving objects, and if he says "I will open the gates to-day, and I will answer prayer to-day," it will be the height of impertinence if we reply, "Thou must wait my time. Go thy way: when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Is God to wait as a lackey upon you? You deserve his wrath, will you slight his love? He speaks in amazing tenderness, will you exhibit astounding hardness? Be not so daring, so profane, so cruel as to talk of delay when the divine message lays such stress on your immediate attention, saying, "To-day if ye will hear his voice."

If this strain should not affect the conscience let me try another. The voice here spoken of is *the voice of love*. How wooing are its tones! The Lord in Holy Scripture speaks of mercy and of pardon bought with blood, the blood of his dear Son. O man, he calls you to him, not that he may slay you, but that he may save you. He does not summon you to a prison, but he invites you to a banquet. God speaks not as judge, but as father; not as from Sinai, but from Calvary:—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do not be cruel to almighty love! Be not ungenerous to eternal pity! When the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day if ye will hear his voice," oh, I pray you, hear and your soul shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Personally, I can resist harshness, but love subdues me. I hope that you are cast in even a softer mould than I am. Even human love is hard to resist, but, oh, the love of God, who can withstand it? Base is the spirit that can harden itself against the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus.

Remember, too, that this is *the voice of power*. This is a sweet thought for those of you who are without strength. You will perhaps say, "I cannot turn unto God;" but *he* can turn you. You lament that you cannot feel as you would wish: he can give you every gracious feeling. God's voice alone created the world, he spake the universe out of nothing, and when darkness enwrapped it he said, "Light be," and light was; he who spake thus in nature can thus speak in grace, and work salvation in you. The text warns you against hardening your heart, and if you will listen to the voice of God it will soften your heart. "His voice breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; his voice maketh the hinds to calve;" so can his voice break your hard heart and cause your hesitating spirit to decide. Only yield to it; yield to it now; the day may come when you will never hear it again. It is a pitiful story I once heard told of an old man sitting alone with his little grandchild. Taking the little child on his knee he said, "My boy, seek the Lord betimes; seek him now." "Grandpa," said he, "have you sought him?" "No, child," he said, "no." "But, grandpa, should you not seek him?" The old man shook his head and sadly answered, "I would, child, but my heart is hard; my heart is hard. There was a time"; and then the old man wept. Oh, but if

such an old man be here, I say to him, there was a time and there *is* a time, for even now, though your heart be hard, is there not the promise, "I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh"? Old man, the Holy Ghost saith still, "To-day, to-day;" and he that saith "to-day" can make to-day for thee a day of tenderness and melting, till you will be no longer like a stone. How often have I felt the power of that verse—

> "Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
> Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
> Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
> And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

The Lord put that new song into all your mouths.

The voice of God, let me add now, to close this point, ought to be heard because it is *a pledging voice*. God, by calling you, pledges himself that he will hear you if you come. When he saith to you, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" he pledges himself that you shall not die if you turn to him. When he saith, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found," he doth, as it were, covenant that he will be found of you. Listen, then, to his promising voice, his cheering voice; it will cast all unbelieving fear out of you, and drive away Satan better than David's harp drove the evil spirit out of Saul. God help you so to do.

The voice of God should be *easy to hear;* for "the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness. The Lord of glory thundereth." All nature bows before the roll of his voice. Full often during this week, above the roar of the sea, or the clamour of traffic in the street, peal on peal the voice of God was heard, till the mountains trembled to their foundations and the heavens were astonished. What deafness must sin have caused to man that he cannot hear the voice of God! Oh, be willing to let that voice penetrate your hearts; it will do so if ye be but willing that it should. May God work in you to will of his good pleasure. I fear that some of you are so very busy that you will not reserve your ear for God even for half an hour. You are too much taken up with the discord of the world to heed the harmony of heaven. Diodorus Siculus says that in Sicily the herbs are sometimes so odoriferous, and in certain places there are such thick beds of them, that when hounds pass through them they lose the scent, and I fear that in some men's lives there are so many vanities, so much love of the world, so many poisonous flowers, in fact, that they lose scent of things eternal, if they ever had any. Yet what will it profit you if you gain the world and lose your souls? You will not gain the world in business in these dull times, profits are small now; you will not gain a world, will you? No, nor half a world, nor even a moderate fortune; but whatever your gain is, look at it and judge if it be not a poor compensation for a lost heaven, a lost eternity, a lost soul.

If you lose your soul you have lost all. A bankrupt may begin again if it be but bankruptcy of this world's goods; but what can he do who is bankrupt for eternity and can never start anew? Oh, you that never think of this, if you never have another warning let this come home to you! You must die, sirs! You must leave your moneys and properties, your shops and your warehouses. You of smaller estate must leave your cozy cottage or your comfortable room, and all the little

treasures of home; and what will your naked spirit do if it has no resting-place beyond the skies? Must it flit for ever over a shoreless deluge of woe and find no rest for the sole of its foot? Hearken and consider. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Thus saith the Lord, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." May the Lord bless you now, and may his Spirit lead you to hear, to believe, to obey.

III. Now comes our third point, and as time presses we must speak in condensed words of THE EVIL TO BE DREADED. "Harden not your hearts": there is no need, they are hard enough already. "Harden not your hearts": there is no excuse, for why should you resist love? "Harden not your hearts": there can be no good in it; a man is the less a man in proportion to his loss of tenderness of heart. Sensibility is, in many aspects, a high possession; sensibility of the affections and the heart is rather to be cultivated than lessened; for it may turn out to be the beginning of grace. "Harden not your hearts": you cannot soften them, but you can harden them. There is an awful power for evil about every man; do not try how far it will carry you. To do good man needs the help of grace, but to do ill he needs no aid, and if he did the devil is there to lend it to him right speedily. "Harden not your hearts," for this will be your ruin; it is suicide of soul.

For, first, *it will be a serious evil if you do.* To harden the heart in this case is to harden it against God. The voice is that of the Lord of hosts. Be astonished, O heavens, God is speaking in boundless grace, and the man is hardening his heart in the presence of God! Under the sound of love's entreaties, within ear-shot of mercy's imploring tones, the sinner is hardening his heart. Sad work to harden one's heart against one's own welfare! Shall any man do this and go unpunished? What think you?

He hardens his heart wilfully; he feels some drawings to good things, and he pulls back. Grace leads, and the man starts aside with resolve not to follow. Have you ever done that, my hearer? Did you ever say, "It will not do," and put down the rising emotion? Did you ever when reading a good book, or at a death-bed side, or when hearing an earnest sermon, do violence to your better self? Take care, take care, they will be lost indeed who of set purpose wander from the right path. O do not perish out of spite to love. Some have resisted conscience frequently: they find it hard to go to hell, and yet they push on. Many of the more dissolute kind slide downward from vice to vice; they perform a horrible *glissade*, as down a mountain of ice: they give themselves up to iniquity, and away they go to perdition. Woe unto such! Others of us have been highly favoured, for across our way God has, as it were, cast felled trees and iron chains to stop our downward career. If you do get lost, some of you will have to wade through your mother's tears and leap over your father's prayers, and your minister's entreaties; you will have to force a passage through the warnings of godly people and the examples of pious relatives. Why this effort to destroy your own souls? Why so desperately set on self-destruction? It must be a gigantic evil for a man to do this and still to do it. Will you do it again this morning? Are you resolved to be lost? If so, then there is one thing I would like you to do, and that is, to put it in writing.

I would, daring as it seems of me, challenge you to write out your covenant with hell. I would have you look yourself in the face and say, "I have surrendered myself to a life of sin, and I am resolved to take the consequences, and to die an enemy to God." If you will put that in black and white I feel persuaded you will start back from it and say, "It must not be." But you answer, "No, I could not write it." Then wherefore do it? Perhaps this morning one more obstinate fit will end all our hope of you; one more holding of conscience by the throat until it turns black in the face with your grip may be the final action that shall decide your future, and you will never be troubled again by compunction or conviction. Ah me, if it should come to this that you will henceforth glide down without a jerk into the bottomless pit! God forbid it. Oh Almighty Spirit, suffer it not to be so with any here! To harden the heart is a great evil.

And *it is a greater sin*, let me say next, *in some than in others*, for the Scripture quotes the instance of Israel. The Holy Ghost says, "As in the provocation, when your fathers tempted me and saw my works forty years." Some of you are the highly privileged as compared with others. Look at the multitudes that live in our back streets and courts and alleys who never heard the gospel, were never trained to go to the house of prayer, and who live and die ignorant of it! How much better your lot! Many of you cannot recollect when you first came to a place of worship; you were brought here when you were children; you know the gospel thoroughly, though you know it not in your hearts: what guilt must be yours to sin against such light and such special advantages! Some of you have often been warned; you have frequently twisted about on those seats most uneasily; you have gone home and you could not eat; you have felt you must turn, but you have not done so! You are as careless as ever. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Certain of you have also been chastened; you have had a great deal of trouble; you have lost your dearest friend, or you have been sick yourself, and been forced to look into eternity, and see how dark it is. On your weary bed you moaned in spirit—

> "Dark is all the world before me,
> Darker yet eternity."

Yet affliction has had no good effect upon you. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." Already you are as ill as you can be; the whole head is sick with sorrow, and the whole heart faint with grief; you have bruises and sores to-day as the result of God's chastening. Will you revolt more and more? Will you still offend? Ay, and on the other hand, some of you have been greatly indulged by God: you have all that heart could wish. He has prospered you in business beyond your expectation; he has made you happy in your wife and in your children; he has set a hedge about you, and all that you have, and yet you are not his. Oh, why can you stand out against love when she multiplies her favours? I pray and beseech you, by the love of our dear God, treat him not so ill, but confess your fault, and seek his face. I know some, too, who have had hard struggles of conscience, and are having them now. Which way they will turn I know not. May

God cast the weight of the cross into the scale and decide them for heaven! Perhaps I am even speaking to some who have made a profession of religion, but do not really know the power of it in their own hearts, and are acting very inconsistently with it, and doing much to dishonour the name of Christ: by the vows they have made in the baptism wherein they declared that they were buried with Christ let them hear his voice, and hearken to him ere the day of grace shall close.

I must beg your further attention a minute while I say that this great sin, *this dreadful sin, can be committed in a great many ways.* Only one thing can soften the heart, and that is the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit; but fifty things can harden the heart. I shall tell you what others do, but I beseech you not to emulate them,—"Harden not your hearts." Some harden their hearts by a resolution not to feel: they set their faces like flints and resolve to shake off the word. I recollect preaching once when my host disappeared on a sudden about the middle of the sermon, and I noticed that a friend who had travelled there with me disappeared too. Afterwards I found out the reason. I said, "What made So-and-so go out?" He said, "I guessed what it was, and I went after him, and he said to me, 'Mr. Spurgeon handles me like a piece of India-rubber, and shapes me as he likes. If I stop in there I shall be converted, and that will never do, and therefore I slipped out.'" Ah me, many fly from their best friend. While they are plastic they are afraid of being cast into the right mould. Some of you are very much like plaster of Paris, or other cement, which will take any shape while it is soft; but oh, how quick it sets, and there is no altering it. If you are somewhat affected this morning, do not resist the feeling, but give the full assent and consent of your heart to it. Who knows? You may now be saved. Perhaps, if you are not moulded while I am preaching, on the way home the plaster will set, hard as a rock, and your shape will be fixed for eternity.

Many harden their hearts by delay, by not yielding to-day, by wishing still to wait. Hundreds harden their hearts by pretended doubts, by making foolish criticisms and cavilling remarks. They talk about the speaker's mode of utterance, and they get their conscience quiet by remembering a false pronunciation or an ungrammatical sentence; or else they say, "We cannot be sure of it; Professor Wiseman says differently." Ah, yes; but if infidel professors are cast into hell their learned observations will not comfort you when you perish in their company. Look to your own souls, and let the professors see to theirs. Some of these literary and scientific men will have a great deal to answer for; they gain their eminence by daring to say presumptuous words which better men tremble to hear, and unbelieving souls welcome their wickedness. I have small respect for these advocates of Satan, these decoy-birds of the destroyer. I charge you, do not pretend to be unbelievers if you are not, nor invent doubts for the mere sake of pacifying your consciences.

Too many silence their consciences by getting into evil company, and by running into silly amusements, all intended to kill time and prevent thought upon divine things. A number of people harden their hearts by indulging a favourite sin. There is a man here who knows the gospel well, and I thought that he was saved; but he loves the intoxicating cup,

he drinks every now and then till he is drunken, and that one sin is destroying him, though in other respects he is a fine fellow. As sure as he lives he will commit that folly once too often, and perish miserably. When he is sober he knows his wickedness as well as any man, and even weeps over it; but I give very little for his tears now, since they have flowed so many times that we cannot believe in their sincerity. His repentance dries as soon as his handkerchief. Oh that God would create sincerity in him, and make his heart weep instead of his eyes! Darling sins are sure destroyers. We must give up sin, or give up hope of heaven. John Bunyan, in his Holy War, describes "Sweet-sin hold" as a favourite fortress of Satan, which long held out against the Prince Immanuel. Oh that we could raze it to the ground! My hearer, wilt thou have thy sin and go to hell, or wilt thou leave thy sin and go to heaven? Thou canst not take sin with thee into God's rest, neither canst thou be Satan's darling and God's favourite. Grace will not permit any sin to be loved. He who loves sin hates God. I cannot go into further detail; but, oh, how many things may be used to harden the heart.

This sin will bring with it the most fearful consequences. Harden not your heart, for by such conduct the last opportunity of entering into the divine rest may pass away. "He sware in his wrath, They shall not enter into my rest!" You wish to rest at last, you long to rest even now. But it cannot be till you yield to God. You are not at peace now, and you never will be if you harden your hearts. God is gently drawing some of you this morning; I can feel that he is doing so. I have deep sympathy with you; I know how you are feeling, you want to get alone, and fall down on your knees to pray. Pray now! Cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," in the pew, at once. You do not need to wait to get home. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to yield your heart to Jesus Christ at this very time, for, if not, there will surely come one of these days a last time in which you will feel, and you will after that be given up to a conscience seared as with a hot iron, never to feel again.

Bethink you in what plight you will be when you come to die without Christ. How would you like to die like Queen Elizabeth, of whom history tells us that she would not go to bed, she would have cushions on the floor; for if she went to bed she would die, and she could not bear the thought? This was her frequent cry, "Call time again! Call time again! Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time! Call time again!" Her majesty, whom you have seen tricked out with all her ruffs and fardingales, and the like, all haggard and in deshabille upon the ground, shrieked out, "Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time!" May God grant that such may never be your lot; for if you so die—there is a something after death more awful still. I will say but little on that alarming theme, but put it in one verse as I learned it when a child, and as I believe it after many an anxious thought. Hear the truth, tremble, and turn unto the Lord!

"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains."

Escape for thy life! To-day if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not [redacted]e heart.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 8TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John xv. 14.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is beyond all comparison the best of friends: a friend in need, a friend indeed. "Friend!" said Socrates, "there is no friend!" but Socrates did not know our Lord Jesus, or he would have added, "except the Saviour." In the heart of our Lord Jesus there burns such friendship towards us that all other forms of it are as dim candles to the sun. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." An ordinary man has gone as far as ever he can when he has died for his friend; and yet he would have died anyhow, so that in dying for his friend he does but pay, somewhat beforehand, a debt which must inevitably have been discharged a little further on. With Christ there was no necessity to die at all, and this, therefore, places his love and his friendship alone by itself. He died who needed not to die, and died in agony when he might have lived in glory: never did man give such proof of friendship as this.

Let the friendship of our Lord to us stand as the model of our friendship to him. It cannot be so in all respects, because our situations and conditions are different: his must always be the love of the greater to the less, the love of the benefactor to one in need, the love of the Redeemer to those who are bought with a price; but, setting those points aside, the whole tone and spirit of our Lord's friendship are such that the more closely we can imitate it the better. Such friendship as his should be reflected in a friendship most hearty and self-sacrificing on our part.

Our Lord does not, I think, in this text speak to us about his being our friend, but about our being his friends. He is "the friend of sinners"; but sinners are not his friends till their hearts are changed. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"; we are not his friends till then. His love to us is entirely of himself, but friendship needs something from us. Friendship cannot be all on one side: one-sided friendship is more fitly called mercy, grace, or benevolence; friendship in its full sense is mutual. You may do all you will for a

man and be perfectly benevolent, and yet he may make you no return; but friendship can only exist where there is a response. Hence, we have not before us the question as to whether Christ loves us or not, as to whether Christ has pity on us or not; for in another part of Scripture we read of "his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." He befriended us when we were enemies, but that is not our subject just now: the question is about our being friends to him, and such we must be made if, indeed, there is to be any intimacy of mutual friendship. Friendship cannot be, as I have said before, all on one side; it is like a pair of scales, there must be something to balance on the other side; there must be a return of kindly feeling from the person loved. Jesus tells us here that if we are to be his friends we must do whatsoever he commands us, and that out of love to him.

Beloved, it is the highest honour in the world to be called the friend of Christ. There is no title surely that excels in dignity that which was worn by Abraham, who was called "The friend of God." Lord Brooke was so delighted with the friendship of Sir Philip Sydney that he ordered to be engraved upon his tomb nothing but this, "Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sydney." There is beauty in such a feeling, but yet it is a small matter compared with being able to say, "Here lives a friend of Christ." O wondrous condescension that he should call me "friend." If I am indeed a true believer, not only is he *my* friend, without which I could have no hope here or hereafter, but he hath in the aboundings of his grace been pleased to regard me as *his* friend, and write me down in the honoured list of intimates who are permitted to speak familiarly with him, as those do between whom there are no secrets, for their hearts are told out to him whilst he hides nothing from them, but saith, "If it were not so I would have told you." Beloved, in what a light this sets obedience to Christ's commandments. I cannot help at this early moment in the sermon noticing how the doctrine of our text transfigures obedience, and makes it the joy and glory of life. How precious it is, for it is a better seal to friendship than the possession of the largest gifts and influence. Christ does not say, "Ye are my friends, if ye rise to a position of respectability among men, or honour in the church." No, however poor you may be, and those to whom he spake these words were very poor, he says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Obedience is better than wealth and better than rank. Jesus values his friends, not by what they have, or what they wear, but by what they *do*. The whole eleven apostles we may put down as having remarkable qualifications for their life-work; yet their Lord does not say, "Ye are my friends, because I have endowed you with abilities for the apostleship." Even to these leaders of his sacramental host Jesus says plainly, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." That is the point by which your friendship shall be tested: "If ye are obedient ye are my friends." He says neither less nor more to any of us who this day aspire to the high dignity of being contained within the circle of his personal friendship. You must, my brethren, yield obedience to your Master and Lord, and be eager to do it, or you are not his bosom friends. This is the one essential, which grace alone can give us. Do we rebel against the

request? Far from it; our joy and delight lie in bearing our Beloved's easy yoke.

I. Let us come to the subject more closely, and notice first, that OUR LORD HIMSELF TELLS US WHAT OBEDIENCE HE REQUESTS from those who call themselves his friends. True friends are eager to know what they can do to please the objects of their love; let us gladly hearken to what our adorable Lord now speaks to the select circle of his chosen. He asks of one and all obedience. None of us are exempted from doing his commandments. However lofty or however lowly our condition, we must obey; if our talent be but one, we must obey, and if we have ten, still we must obey. There can be no friendship with Christ unless we are willing, each one, to yield him hearty, loyal service. Let it go round, then, to all of you upon whom the name of Jesus Christ is named: if enrolled among the friends of Jesus you must be careful about your own personal obedience to his blessed will. Forget not that even to the queen, standing on his right in gold of Ophir, the word is given, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

It must be *active obedience*, notice that. "Ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." Some think it is quite sufficient if they avoid what he forbids. Abstinence from evil is a great part of righteousness, but it is not enough for friendship. If a man can say, "I am not a drunkard, I am not dishonest, I am not unchaste, I am not a violator of the Sabbath, I am not a liar;" so far so good, but such righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, and they cannot enter the kingdom. It is well if you do not wilfully transgress, but if you are to be Christ's friends there must be far more than this. It would be a poor friendship which only said, "I am your friend, and to prove it, I don't insult you, I don't rob you, I don't speak evil of you." Surely there must be more positive evidence to certify friendship. The Lord Jesus Christ lays great stress upon positive duties: it is, "*if ye do* whatsoever I command you." At the last day he will say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." In that memorable twenty-fifth of Matthew nothing is said about negative virtues; but positive actions are cited and dwelt upon in detail. You know it is an old English saying, "He is my friend who grinds at my mill." That is to say, friendship shows itself in doing helpful acts, which prove sincerity. Fine words are mere wind, and go for nothing if not backed up with substantial deeds of kindness. Friendship cannot live on windy talk, it needs the bread of matter of fact. The inspired word says, "Show me a proof of your love; show it by doing whatsoever I command you."

We are clear, from the wording of the text, that the obedience Christ expects from us is *continuous*. He does not say, "If you sometimes do what I command you—if you do it on Sundays, for instance—if you do what I command you in your place of worship, that will suffice; but no, we are to abide in him and keep his statutes even unto the end. I am not now preaching works as the way of salvation but as the evidences of fellowship, which is quite another thing. We must seek in every place, at all times, and under all circumstances, to do as Jesus bids us, out of a cheerful spirit of reverence to him. Such tender, loving subjection as a godly wife gives to her husband must be gladly yielded by us throughout life if we are his friends.

This obedience must also be *universal.* "Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command you." No sooner is anything discovered to be the subject of a command than the man who is a true friend of Christ says, "I will do it," and he does it. He does not pick and choose which precept he will keep and which he will neglect, for this is self-will and not obedience. I have known some professors err greatly in this matter. They have been very strict over one point, and they have blamed everybody who did not come up to their strictness, talking as if that one duty fulfilled the whole law. Straining at gnats has been a very leading business with many; they have bought a choice assortment of strainers of the very finest net to get out all the gnats from their cup, but at the same time, on another day they have opened their mouths and swallowed a camel without a qualm. This will not do: the test is, "If ye do *whatsoever* I command you." I do not mean that little things are unimportant: far from it. If there be a gnat that Christ bids you strain at, strain it out with great diligence; do not let a midge escape you if he bids you remove it. The smallest command of Christ may often be the most important; and I will tell you why. Some things are great, evidently great, and for many reasons even a hypocritical professor will attend to them, but the test may lie in the minor points, which hypocrites do not take the trouble to notice, since no human tongue would praise them for so doing. Here is the proof of your love. Will you do the smaller thing for Jesus as well as the more weighty matter? Too many say, "I do not see any use in it, I can be saved without it; there are a great many different opinions on the point," and so on. All this cometh of evil, and is not consistent with the spirit of friendship with Christ, for love pleases even in trifles. Is it Christ's will? Is it plainly a precept of his word? Then it is not yours to reason why, nor to raise any question. The reality of your subjection to your Lord and Master may hinge upon those seemingly insignificant points. A domestic servant might place the breakfast on the table, and feel that she had done her duty, but if her mistress told her to place the salt at the corner, and she did not, she would be asked the cause of her neglect. Suppose she replied to her mistress, "I did not think it needful; I placed the breakfast before you, but a little salt was too trifling a matter for me to troubled about." Her mistress might answer, "But I told you to be sure and put out the salt-cellar. Mind you do so to-morrow." Next morning there is no salt, and the maid says she did not see the use of setting it on the table. Her mistress is displeased, and tells her that her wish must be carried out. Will she not be a very foolish and vexatious girl if she refuses to do so, because she does not see the use of it? I think it is likely that the young woman would have to find another situation before long, for such conduct is very annoying. So it is with those professors who say, "I have attended to the main things, and what I neglect is quite a minor matter." Such are not even good servants; friends they never can be. I beseech you, dear brethren, labour after universal obedience. "Whatsoever he saith to you, do it." Only by an earnest endeavour to carry out the whole of his will can you live in happy fellowship with him, and be indeed his friends.

Note well, that this obedience is to be rendered as *to Christ himself.*

Put the emphasis on the little word *I*: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever *I* command you." We are to do these things because Jesus commands them. Does not the royal person of our Lord cast a very strong light upon the necessity of obedience? When we refuse to obey we refuse to do what the Lord himself commands. When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Redeemer, is denied obedience it is treason. How can rebels against the King be his Majesty's friends? The precepts of Scripture are not the commandments of man nor the ordinances of angels, but the laws of Christ, and how dare we despise them? We are to act rightly because Jesus commands us, and we love to do his pleasure; there can be no friendship without this. Oh for grace to serve the Lord with gladness.

To close this first point, it appears that our Lord would have us obey him *out of a friendly spirit*. Obedience to Christ as if we were forced to do it under pains and penalties would be of no worth as a proof of friendship; every one can see that. He speaks not of slaves, but of friends; he would not have us perform duties from fear of punishment or love of reward; that which he can accept of his friends must be the fruit of love. His will must be our law because his person is our delight. Some professors need to be whipped to their duties; they must hear stirring sermons, and attend exciting meetings, and live under pressure; but those who are Christ's friends need no spur but love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." True hearts do what Jesus bids them without flogging and dogging, urging and forcing. Constrained virtue is spoiled in the making, as many a piece of earthenware is cracked in the baking. The wine of our obedience must flow freely from the ripe cluster of the soul's love, or it will not be fit for the royal cup. When duty becomes delight and precepts are as sweet as promises, then are we Christ's friends, and not till then.

II. Having thus set forth what kind of obedience Christ requests, I now notice, in the second place, that our Lord leads us to gather from this sentence that THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY HIM ARE NO FRIENDS OF HIS. He may yet look upon them and be their friend by changing their hearts and forgiving their sins; but as yet they are no friends of his, for a man who does not obey Christ *does not give the Saviour his proper place*, and this is an unfriendly deed. If I have a friend I am very careful that, if he has honour anywhere, he shall certainly have due respect from me. If he be my superior, I am anxious that he should not think me intrusive, or imagine that I would take undue advantage of his kindness. He will be higher in my esteem than in the regard of anyone else. He who is truly Christ's friend delights to honour him as a great king, but he who will not yield him his sovereign rights is a traitor and not a friend. Our Lord is the head over all things to his church, and this involves the joyful submission of the members: disobedience denies to Christ the dignity of that holy Headship which is his prerogative over all the members of his mystical body, and this is not the part of a true friend. How can you be his friend if you will not admit his rule? It is vain to boast that you trust his cross if you do not reverence his crown.

He who does not do his commandments cannot be Christ's friend, because *he is not of one mind with Christ:* that is evident. Can two

walk together except they be agreed? True friendship exists not between those who differ upon first principles, and there can be no points of agreement between Jesus Christ and the man who will not obey him; for he in fact says, "Lord Jesus, thy pure and holy will is obnoxious to me; thy sweet and gracious commands are a weariness to me. What friendship can be here? They are not of one mind: Christ is for holiness, this man is for sin; Christ is for spiritual-mindedness, this man is carnal-minded; Christ is for love, this man is for self; Christ is for glorifying the Father, this man is for honouring himself: how can there be any friendship when they are diametrically opposed in design, object, and spirit? It is not possible.

He who obeys not Christ cannot be Christ's friend, though he may profess to be. *He may be a very high and loud professor, and for that reason he may be all the more an enemy of the cross:* for when men see this man walking according to his own lusts they cry out, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," and they attribute all his faults to his religion, and straightway begin to blaspheme the name of Christ. Through the inconsistent conduct of our Lord's professed friends his cause is more hindered than by anything else. Suppose you and I had some very intimate associate who was found drunk in the street, or committing burglary or theft, should we not feel disgraced by his conduct? When he was brought before the magistrate would you like to have it said, "This person is the bosom friend of So-and-so"? Oh, you would cover your face and beg your neighbours never to mention it. For such a fellow to be known as your friend would compromise your name and character. We say this even weeping, that Jesus Christ's name is compromised, and his honour is tarnished among men by many who wear the name of Christian without having the spirit of Christ: such cannot be his dear companions. Alas, for the wounds which Jesus has received in the house of his friends. When Cæsar fell he was slain by the daggers of his friends! In trust he found treason. Those whose lives he had spared, spared not his life. Woe to those who under the garb of Christianity crucify the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. Nothing burns Christ's cheek like a Judas kiss, and he has had many such.

Those that obey him not cannot be owned by Jesus as his friends, for *that would dishonour him indeed.* Time was—I know not how it is now—when if any man wanted to be made a count, or to get an honourable title, he had only to pay so much at Rome into the Papal exchequer, and he could be made a noble at once. The titles thus purchased were neither honourable to those who gave nor to those who received them. Whatever his pretended vicar may do, our Lord himself sells no dignities. The title of "friends of Jesus" goes with a certain character, and cannot be otherwise obtained. Those are his friends who obey him:—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." He grants this patent of nobility to all believers who lovingly follow him, but on his list of friends he enters none beside. Do you not see that his honour requires this? Would you have our Lord stand up and say, "The drunkard is my friend"? Would you hear him say, "That fraudulent bankrupt is my intimate companion"? Would you have Jesus claim friendly companionship with the vicious and profane? A man is known by his

company; what would be thought of Jesus if his intimate associates were men of loose morals and unrighteous principles? To go among them for their good is one thing, to make them his friends is another. Where there is no kinship, no likeness, no point of agreement, the fair flower of friendship cannot take root. We may, therefore, read the text negatively, "Ye are not my friends, if ye do not the things which I command you."

III. Our third observation is: THOSE WHO BEST OBEY CHRIST ARE ON THE BEST OF TERMS WITH HIM. "Ye are my friends," he seems to say, "and live near to me, enjoying practical personal friendship and daily intercourse with me, when you promptly obey." Some of you know by personal experience, brothers and sisters, that you cannot walk in holy converse with Christ unless you keep his commandments. There is no feeling of communion between our souls and Christ when we are conscious of having done wrong and yet are not sorry for it. If we know that we have erred, as we often do, and our hearts break because we have grieved our Beloved, and we go and tell him our grief, and confess our sin, we are still his friends, and he kisses away our tears, saying, "I know your weakness: I willingly blot out your offences. There is no breach of friendship between us; I will manifest myself to you still." When we know that we are wrong, and feel no softening of heart about it, then we cannot pray, we cannot speak with the Beloved, and we cannot walk with him as his friends. Familiarity with Jesus ceases when we become familiar with known sin. If, again, knowing any act to be wrong we persevere in it, there cannot be any happy friendship between us and our Saviour. If conscience has told you, dear brother, that such and such a thing ought to be given up, and you continue in it, the next time you are on your knees you will feel yourself greatly hampered, and when you sit down before your open Bible and hope to have communion with Christ as you have formerly enjoyed it, you will find that he has withdrawn himself, and will not be found by you. Is there any wonder? If sin lieth at the door how can the Lord smile on us? Secret sin will poison communion at the fountain head. If there is a quarrel between you and Christ, and you are hugging to your bosom that which he abhors, how can you enjoy friendship? He tells you that sin is a viper that will kill you, but you reply, "It is a necklace of jewels," and, therefore, you put it about your neck. Do you wonder that because he loves you he is grieved at such mad behaviour? Oh, do not thus bring injury upon yourself. Do not thus pour contempt upon his wise commands.

Some Christians will never get into full fellowship with Christ because they neglect to study his word and search out what his will is. It ought to be a serious work with every Christian, especially in commencing his career, to find what is the will of his Lord on all subjects. Half the Christian people in the world are content to ask, "What is the rule of our church?" That is not the question: the point is, "What is the rule of Christ?" Some plead, "My father and mother before me did so." I sympathise in a measure with that feeling: filial reverence commands admiration; but yet in spiritual things we are to call no man "father," but make the Lord Jesus our master and exemplar. God has not placed your conscience in your mother's keeping, nor has he

committed to your father the right or the power to stand responsible for you: every man must bear his own burden and render his own account: search ye the Scriptures for yourselves each one of you, and follow no rule but that which is inspired. Take your light directly from the sun. Let holy Scripture be your unquestioned rule of faith and practice; and if there is any point about which you are uncertain, I charge you by your loyalty to Christ, if ye are his friends, try and find out what his will is; and when once you are sure upon that point never mind the human authorities or dignities that oppose his law. Let there be no question, no hesitation, no delay. If he commands you, carry out his will though the gates of hell thunder at you. You are not his friends, or, at any rate, you are not so his friends as to enjoy the friendship unless you resolutely seek to please him in all things. The intimacy between you and Christ will be disturbed by sin; you cannot lean your head upon his bosom and say, "Lord, I know thy will, but I do not mean to do it." Could you look up into that dear face—that visage once so marred, now lovelier than heaven itself—and say, "My Lord, I love thee, but I will not do thy will in every point"? By the very love he bears to you, he will chasten you for that rebellious spirit if you indulge it. It is a horrible evil; holy eyes will not endure it. He is a jealous lover, and will not tolerate sin, which is his rival.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Oh, beloved, see to this! Under all the crosses, and losses, and trials of life there is no comfort more desirable than the confidence that you have aimed at doing your Lord's will. If a man suffers for Christ's sake while steadily pursuing the course of holiness, he may rejoice in such suffering. Losses borne in the defence of the right and the true are gains. Jesus is never nearer his friends than when they bravely bear shame for his sake. If we get into trouble by our own folly we feel the smart at our very heart; but if we are wounded in our Lord's battles the scars are honourable. For his sake we may accept reproach, and bind it about us as a wreath of honour. Jesus delights to be the Companion of those who are cast out by kinsfolk and acquaintances for the truth's sake and for fidelity to his cross. They may call the faithful one fanatic, and enthusiast, and all such ill-sounding names; but over these there is no need to fret, for the honour of being Christ's friend infinitely outweighs the world's opinion. When we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth he is responsible for results; we are not.

> "Though dark be my way, since he is my guide,
> 'Tis mine to obey, 'tis his to provide."

The consequences which follow from our doing right belong to God. Abhor the theory that for the sake of a great good you may do a little wrong. I have heard men say, ay and Christian men too, "If I were strictly to follow my convictions I should have to leave a post of great usefulness, and therefore I remain where I am, and quiet my conscience as well as I can. I should lose opportunities of doing good, which I now possess, if I were to put in practice all I believe, and therefore I remain in a position which I could not justify on any other ground." Is this according to the mind of Jesus? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? How many bow in the house of Rimmon, and hope that

the Lord will have mercy upon his servants in this thing. We shall see if it will be so. We may not do evil that good may come. If I knew that to do right would shake this whole island I should be bound to do it; God helping me, I would do it; and if I heard that a wrong act would apparently bless a whole nation, I have no right to do wrong on that account. No bribe of supposed usefulness should purchase our conscience. Right is right, and must always end in blessing; and wrong is wrong, and must always end in curse, though for a while it may wear the appearance of surpassing good. Did not the devil lead our first parents astray by the suggestion that great benefit would arise out of their transgression? "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods," said the arch-deceiver. Would it not be a grand thing for men to grow unto gods? "Certainly," says Eve; "I would not lose the opportunity. The race which is yet to be would blame me if I did. I would not have men remain inferior creatures through my neglect." For the sake of the promised good she ventured upon evil. Thousands of people sin because it seems so advantageous, so wise, so necessary, so sure to turn out well. Hear what Christ says,—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." If you do evil that good may come you cannot walk with him, but if your heart is set towards his statutes you shall find him loving you, and taking up his abode with you.

IV. Fourthly, by our text we are taught that THE MOST FRIENDLY ACTION A MAN CAN DO FOR JESUS IS TO OBEY HIM: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Rich men have thought to do the most friendly act possible towards Christ by giving an immense sum to build a church, or to found almshouses or schools. If they are believers, and have done this thing as an act of obedience to Christ's law of stewardship, they have well done, and the more of such munificence the better, but where splendid benefactions are given out of ostentation, or from the idea that some merit will be gained by the consecration of a large amount of wealth, the whole business is unacceptable. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned. Jesus asks not lavish expenditure, but ourselves. He has made this the token of true love: "If ye do whatsoever I command you." "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." However much we are able to give we are bound to give it, and should give it cheerfully; but if we suppose that any amount of giving can stand as a substitute for personal obeying we are greatly mistaken. To bring our wealth and not to yield our hearts is to give the casket and steal the jewel. How dare we bring our sacrifice in a leprous hand? We must ourselves be cleansed in the atoning blood before we can be accepted, and our hearts must be changed before our offering can be pure in God's sight.

Others have imagined that they could show their friendliness to Christ by some remarkable action of self-mortification. Among Romanists, especially in the old time, it was believed that misery and merit went together, and so men tortured themselves that they might please God. They went for many a day without washing themselves or their clothes, and fancied that they thus acquired the odour of sanctity. I do not believe that Jesus thinks a man any more his friend because he is dirty. Some have put on a hair shirt, or have worn a chain girdle, which made

raw wounds. I do not think that the kind Lord Jesus counts these things to be friendly acts. Ask any humane person whether he would be gratified by knowing that a friend wore a hair shirt for his sake, and he would answer, "Pray let the poor creature wear whatever is most comfortable to him, and that will please me best." The loving Jesus takes no delight in pain and discomfort: the maceration of the body is no doctrine of his. John the Baptist might be an ascetic, but certainly Jesus was not: he came eating and drinking, a man among men. He did not come to demand the rigours of a hermitage or a monastery, else he had never been seen at feasts. When we hear of the nuns of St. Ann sleeping bolt upright in their coffins, we take no particular satisfaction in their doing so; a kind heart would beg them to go to bed. I went over a monastery some time ago, and over each bed was a little cat-o'-nine tails, which I sincerely hope was used to the satisfaction of the possessor, but I did not copy the idea, and buy a couple for my sons, neither have I sent one to each of my special friends, for I should never ask them to flog themselves as a proof of friendship. Our Lord cannot be gratified by self-inflicted, self-invented tortures. These things are will-worship, which is no worship. You may fast forty days if you like, but you will gain no merit by it. Jesus Christ has not demanded this as the gauge of friendship, neither will he regard us as his friends for this. He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," but he does not command you to starve, or to wear sackcloth, or to shut yourselves up in a cell: pride invents these things, but grace teaches obedience.

Certain persons have thought it would be the noblest form of holy service to enter into brotherhoods and sisterhoods. They fancied that they would be Christ's friends indeed if they joined "the Society of Jesus." I have sometimes asked myself whether it might not be well to form a league of Christian men all banded together, to live alone for Jesus, and to give themselves up entirely and wholly to his work; but assuredly the formation of guilds, sisterhoods, or brotherhoods other than the great brotherhood of the church of God, is a thing never contemplated in the New Testament: you shall find no foreshadowing of Franciscans and Dominicans there. All godly women were sisters of mercy, and all Christlike men were of the Society of Jesus, but of monastic and conventual vows we read nothing. That which is not commanded in Scripture is superstition. We are to worship God according to *his* will, not according to our will; and though I were to consecrate myself entirely to what Papists called the religious life, and get away from the associations of ordinary men, and try to spend my whole time in lonely contemplations, yet there would be nothing in it, because the Lord Jesus never required it at my hands. The thing that he does ask for is that we will do whatsoever he commands us. Why is it that people try to do something which he never did command? A schoolmaster will suffer me to appeal to him on this point. If he said to a boy in the school, "Now is the time for you to take your slate and attend to arithmetic," and the boy instead fetched his copy-book, would he not ask if he had understood him? If after a few minutes he finds the boy writing does he say, "You have written that line very [illegible]?" Not at all. It is small matter whether the writing be well or

ill done, for to be writing at all when he was told to be ciphering is a gross act of insubordination. So is it with you and me. We may do something else, and do it splendidly well, and other people may say, "What a pious man he is;" but if we do not the Lord's will we shall not be his friends. We may wear a piece of leather for a sandal, and brown serge for a garment, and forswear boots and coats, but there is no grace in apparel; excellence lies in doing what Christ has commanded.

Some think it a very friendly act towards Christ to attend many religious services in a consecrated building. They are at matins, and vespers, and feasts and fasts without number. Some of us prefer to have our religious services each day in our own homes, and it will be a dreadful thing when family prayer is given up for public services: but a number of people think little of family devotion, they must needs repair to the parish church or to some other temple made with hands; but let no man dream that Jesus is thus made our friend. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, it is well to be found meeting with God's people as often as we can; but still you may multiply your sacraments and increase your ceremonies, and you may attend to this service, and to the other service, until your heart is worn away with grinding at the mill of outward religion. Ye are Christ's friends, if ye do whatsoever he commands ye: that is a better test than early communion or daily mass.

It comes to this, dear friends, that we must steadily, carefully, persistently, cheerfully, do the will of God from the heart in daily life, from the first waking moment till our eyes are closed. Say concerning everything, "What would Jesus have me do about this? What is the teaching of Christ as to this?" "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." You may be a domestic servant, and never be able to give a pound to church work, but you are Jesus' friend if you do whatsoever he commands you: you may be a housewife, and not able to do anything outside of the little family which requires all your attention, but if you are fulfilling your duty to your children, doing that which Christ commands you, you are among the friends of Jesus. You may be only a plain working-man, or a tradesman with a small shop; nobody hears of your name; but if you set the example of honesty, uprightness, and piety, doing all things as to Christ because he has saved you, he will call you his friend. What patent of nobility can equal this? Friendship with Christ is worth a thousand dukedoms.

The practical outcome of it all is this: examine every question as to duty by the light of this one enquiry:—Will this be a friendly action to Christ? If I do this shall I act as Christ's friend? Will my conduct honour him? Then I am glad. If it will dishonour him I will have nothing to do with it. Set each distinct action, as far as you are able, in the scales, and let this be the weight:—Is it a friendly action towards my Redeemer? I wish that we all lived as if Jesus were always present, as if we could see his wounds, and gaze into his lovely countenance. Suppose that to-morrow you are brought into temptation by being asked to do something questionable, decide it this way: if Jesus could come in at that moment and show you his hands and his feet, how would you act in his sight? Behave as you would act under the realised presence

of the Well-beloved. You would not do anything unkind to him, would you? Certainly you would not do anything to grieve him if you saw him before your eyes. Well, keep him always before you. The psalmist cried, "I have set the Lord always before me."

You will want much of the Holy Spirit's anointing to do this. May God give it to you. Live, dear friends, as if Christ would come at once and detect you in the very act. Do that which you would not be ashamed of if the next instant you should see the Lord sitting on the throne of his glory, and calling you before his bar. Thus living, you shall delight yourself in the abundance of peace.

"So shall your walk be close with God,
Calm and serene your frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads you to the Lamb."

Obedience will gladden you with the blissful presence of your Lord, and in that presence you shall find fulness of joy. You shall be the envied of all wise men, for you shall be the beloved of the Lord; and your pathway, if it be not always smooth, shall be always safe, for Jesus never leaves his friend, and he will never leave you, but he will keep you even to the end. May this be my happy case and yours. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—915, 119 (Song II.), 646.

One Penny Each. In neat Wrapper.

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Specially adapted for gratuitous distribution.

TOKEN FOR THE BEREAVED.
LET US PRAY.
CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.
SERMON FOR EVERYBODY.
HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH.
IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?
THE TURNING POINT.
A SPUR FOR A FREE HORSE.
BELLS FOR THE HORSES.
THE WAR HORSE.
GOD'S JEWELS.
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.
CONFESSION OF SIN.
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION.
THE WAY OF SALVATION.
INFANT SALVATION.
HOW TO RAISE THE DEAD.
NONE BUT JESUS.
THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY.
THE SILVER TRUMPET.
JESUS AND THE LAMBS.
A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.
THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH.
BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS.
LOVING ADVICE for ANXIOUS SEEKERS.
THE UPPER HAND.
A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.
LANDLORD AND TENANT
A DOUBLE KNOCK AT THE DOOR OF THE YOUNG.
THERE GO THE SHIPS.
LITTLE DOGS.
THE SILLY DOVE.
THE HOLD FAST.
RECEIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD.
AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY FOR A BELOVED SON.
NUMBER 1500, OR LIFTING UP THE BRAZEN SERPENT.
THE PEARL OF PATIENCE.
FEAR NOT.
THE SEA! THE SEA! THE WIDE AND OPEN SEA!

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Faith which worketh by love."—Galatians v. 6.

ALL ways of justification by human works and outward forms are set aside by the apostle. In one sentence he closes up every road which is cast up by man, and opens up the way of the Lord, even the way of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Some hope to be saved by ritualism: their hopes are smitten hip and thigh by this word, "Neither circumcision availeth anything"; on the other hand, many are relying upon their freedom from all ceremonial, and place their reliance upon a sort of anti-ritualism—they are smitten by the word "nor uncircumcision." As Jews relied upon circumcision, so do many depend upon baptism and sacraments: to these the apostle gives no quarter. Others glory in uncircumcision: they have practised no rites nor ceremonies, their mode of worship is plain even to unsightliness, free almost to disorder, and of this they are apt to make a righteousness. It is quite as easy to make a self-righteousness out of the plainness of the Quaker as out of the gaudiness of the Romanist; and the one confidence will be as fatal as the other. You and I, as Baptists, may glory in the simplicity of our worship, and the scripturalness of our baptism, but if we think that outward things will save us because they are scripturally simple we shall err as much as they do who multiply gorgeous services and pompous processions. Let the whole sentence be quoted: Paul saith, "Neither circumcision availeth anything"; but he does not stop there, for he adds, "nor uncircumcision." The outward, whether decorated or unadorned, whether fixed or free, touches not the saving point: the only thing which can save us is faith in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth as a propitiation for sin. Faith brings us into contact with the healing fountain, and so our natural disease is removed; it appropriates on our behalf the result of the Redeemer's service and sacrifice, and so we become accepted in him; but anything short of this must fail; it is the rending of the garment while the heart is unbroken, the washing of the outside of the cup and platter while the inner part is very filthiness.

The apostle, however, does more than merely condemn other foundations than those of faith; he distinguishes here between faith itself and

its many imitations. It is not every sort of faith that will save the soul. True faith, undoubtedly, will save a man though it be but as a grain of mustard seed; but then it must be true faith—the genuine silver, and not a mere plated article. "Money answereth all things," says the wise man, but then it must be current coin of the realm; for counterfeit money will answer for nothing except to condemn the man who has it in his possession. Real faith will save us, but forgeries of it will increase our peril. Assurance is of God, but presumption is of the devil. The test of true faith is that it works,—"Faith *which worketh*," saith the text. To that end it must first of all live, for it is clear that a dead faith cannot work. There must be heart in our faith, and the Spirit of God breathing in it, or it will not be the living faith of a living child of God. Being alive, true faith must not sleep, but must arouse itself as a child of the day, for a slumbering faith is matter for heart-searching, since sleep is cousin to death. A wakeful faith becomes active, and in its activity lies much of its proof. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is one of Christ's own rules for testing men and things, and we are to know faith by that which comes of it, by what it does for us, and in us, and through us. Faith is not worth having if it is fruitless; it has a name to live and is dead. If it works not at all, it lives not at all, and cannot justify its possession. A dead God may be served by a dead faith, but living, waking, working faith can alone please the ever-living, ever-working Jehovah. God save us from a dreaming faith and a talking faith, and give us "faith which worketh."

"Not words alone it cost the Lord
To purchase pardon for his own;
Nor will a soul by grace restored
Return the Saviour words alone."

A further distinction is also set forth, namely, that true faith "worketh *by love*." There are some who do many works as the result of a kind of faith who, nevertheless, are not justified, as for instance, Herod, who believed in John and did many things, and yet murdered his minister. His faith did work, but it worked by dread and not by love: he feared the stern language of the second Elijah, and the judgments which would come upon him if he rejected the Baptist's warnings, and his faith worked through fear. The great test of the working of saving faith is this, it "worketh by love." If you are led by your faith in Jesus Christ to love him, and so to serve him, then you have the faith of God's elect, you are undoubtedly a saved man, and you may go your way and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free. It shall be joy to you to serve the Lord, since love is the mainspring of your service.

That is the point we are going to speak upon this morning—the connection which exists between faith and love: "Faith which worketh by love." We may be helped to test both our faith and love while we are speaking of the intermingling and intertwisting of the roots and branches of these two graces, and it will do us good to perform a thorough self-examination. It never does any man harm to overhaul himself and to see in what a state he is, whether he really is right or no; whether he is prospering in soul or no. I am afraid of our taking our good estate for granted, but I am not afraid of the most searching self-enquiry. May God the Holy Spirit bless our ministry to this end this morning!

I. Our first observation will be this: FAITH ALWAYS PRODUCES LOVE—"Faith which worketh by love." When faith has anything to do she walks to the field with love at her side. The two graces are inseparable. Like Mary and Martha, they are sisters, and abide in one house. Faith, like Mary, sits at Jesus' feet, and hears his words, and then love diligently goes about the house and rejoices to honour the divine Lord. Faith is light, while love is heat, and in every beam of grace from the Sun of righteousness you will find a measure of each. True faith in God cannot exist without love to him, nor sincere love without faith; they are united, like the Siamese twins, and where you meet the one the other is sure to be present.

This happens *by a necessity of faith's own nature.* The moment a man believes in Jesus Christ he loves him as a matter of course. It is possible to trust in another person and not love him, but from the peculiar circumstances of the case, our Lord having loved us and given himself for us out of the infinite charity of his heart, we are compelled to love him the moment we repose upon him. To trust the bleeding Lamb and not love him is a thing not to be imagined. Faith is a gold ring which in every case the heavenly jeweller sets with the beryl of love. Water faith with a drop of God's own dew and it blossoms into love. The first steps of the prodigal when he comes to himself are all towards his father's house and heart. When he gets home he may make many steps hither and thither about his father's estate, but at the first, at any rate, his face is distinctly towards his Father. Did he not say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father"? The first steps of the soul when it begins to believe in God are desires after him in which there is a measure of love. The affections are aroused and drawn towards God as soon as there is the slightest degree of faith in the soul. Every believer here knows that. Look back to the day when first you saw the Lord, if you can remember it,—the hour you looked to him and were lightened; did you not love him immediately? Love him? Aye! We sometimes fear we loved him better then than now, though I hope that it is not the case. If anyone had asked me, in the first flush of my joy when first I beheld my bleeding Lord, do you love him? I should not have hesitated, but replied, "I love him as my very soul, for he hath redeemed me from going down into the pit." Faith creates love as summer breeds flowers. Our first love came with our first faith by a necessity of nature which can never change.

Love grows out of faith yet further *by the discoveries of beauty in Christ which faith is sure to make.* Faith is the soul's eye, and its telescope, by which it sees that which is so far off as to be otherwise invisible. Holy faith gazes upon the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, realizes his person, and discerns his matchless work, and so creates knowledge, out of which comes love. Faith stands like the cherubim upon the golden mercy-seat, looking downward always upon the blood besprinkled propitiatory, admiring and wondering, spying out something fresh every hour, and thus filling itself with ever-increased delight with those things which the angels desire to look into. Out of this gracious discernment comes admiring love. Faith delights to unveil the superlative beauties of the Well-beloved before the gaze of love, and then faith and love unite in crying out, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

Those who believe can say, "We see Jesus," and those whose hearts are won by him can add, "We loved him because he first loved us." O that we knew our Lord better! O that we believed in him more! Then should we be knit to him as the heart of Jonathan was knit to David.

Faith creates love next *by its appropriation of that which it discerns*, for while faith is the soul's eye it is also the mind's hand by which it grasps the blessing. Faith sees the love of Christ, and then saith, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Faith sees the wounds of Jesus, and perceives his deity through those windows of ruby, and immediately appropriates him, and cries, "My Lord and my God." Love is sure to arise out of a sense of possession. Doth not a mother love her child very much because it is her own? When we have an interest in a person so as to call him, "my brother," "my husband," "my son," then a sense of property increases our sense of affection. This made the Psalmist sing, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee." Why, even in dead things, such as gold and silver, and goods and lands, when they are a man's own they are apt to be loved, for the affections cling to that which is possessed—"Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Hence the danger which attends worldly things, lest our heart be bird-limed with them, and so be held captive, instead of mounting upward towards God. This tendency is clearly seen in reference to higher possessions, and especially with regard to Christ. If Christ is yours, and faith can say, "Jesus is mine," love alters the sentence and cries, "This is my beloved and this is my friend." When the faith of Thomas saw Jesus as Lord and God his love gave a musical ring to his exclamation by joying in personal possession, and calling him "my Lord and my God." Love rejoices in Jesus as her own possession, triumphs in him, and right sweetly sings of love to him because he is her own husband and Lord. Thus you see faith creates love from a necessity of its nature, from the discoveries which it makes, and from its appropriation of the good things that are in Christ. Dear hearer, do you know anything about these matters?

Faith further excites love by another step, namely, *by its enjoying the mercy, and then leading the heart to a grateful acknowledgment of the source of the mercy.* There are two links in the chain in this case: faith wins the mercy by prayer, the mercy is enjoyed, and then out of the enjoyment of the boon springs love to him who gave it. Brethren, what innumerable favours faith has already brought to us. Some of you, I trust, do not look upon the covenant as a locked-up store-room from which nothing is to be taken until you come to die; but the key of David has been put into your hands by faith, and you have enjoyment even now of the fat things full of marrow, and the wines on the lees well refined, which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. At this moment you know that you are justified, you know that you are adopted into the family of God, do you not therefore love the Lord? I know you do. You feel at this moment that you are enjoying the privileges of heirship with Christ, does not this bind you fast to your elder brother? Every day you are receiving providential mercies, I hope you keep your eyes open to see them: every day you are receiving preserving mercies, restoring mercies, instructive mercies, sealing mercies; do you not love God for all these priceless gifts? Spiritual blessings

are coming to you from the God of all grace, and you are filled with joys, like your Saviour's griefs, immense, unknown; surely this cements your soul to your Redeemer. Unless your heart is altogether out of order, you love God better and better, because he is manifesting his love to you more and more. Is it not so? Faith told you that the Lord was good, and then she cried, "I will prove it to you," and she handed out of the covenant store-house mercies rich and rare, and laid them at your feet; and since you have possessed them, and lived upon them as your own, you have blessed the Giver, and loved him more than ever you did before. Thus faith receives promises and feeds love on the fruit of them.

It does this even more sweetly *by the familiarity with God which it breeds in the heart;* for faith is in the habit of going to God with all her burdens, and coming away with her load removed. Faith hath the daily practice of pleading promises with God, speaking to him face to face as a man speaketh with his friend, and receiving favours from the right hand of the Most High, which make even her expectant soul to wonder. Faith commences with God in the morning, as Abraham did, and walks with him in the field at evening, as Isaac did. Faith houses herself with God as the swallow built her nest under the eaves of the temple. Faith's life is in God, even as the life of a fish is in the sea. The bosom of Jesus Christ is the pillow of faith; and the heart of God is the pavilion of faith. Because faith thus keeps us near to God it causes us to love him. Oh, poor blind soul, if you could see Jesus you would love him; you who are most opposed to him would become his friends if you knew him. It is not possible for a believer to be in Christ's company an hour without feeling his heart warmed. The pilgrims to Emmaus said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he spake with us by the way?" Those who have known and believed his love towards them must feel his spell upon their affections, holding them captive. There is none like him among the sons of men: his beauties ravish the heart. If Jesus do but lift the veil and let us have a glimpse of one of his eyes for a moment our hearts are melted within us.

> "Where can such sweetness be
> As I have tasted in thy love,
> As I have found in thee?"

Because faith thus makes us familiar with our divine Lord it must inevitably produce love in the soul.

Once more, and here again are two links instead of one—*this familiarity with Christ soon begets congeniality of disposition and spirit,* for they that are much with Christ become much like Christ. He who lies on a bed of spices will naturally find his garments smell of the same. A mirror upon which the sun is shining is bright itself, and flashes its reflected rays afar. He that walketh with wise men will be wise, but he that dwelleth with the infinite wisdom shall be taught of God. Doubtless happy couples who live together in mutual affection and confidence become very much like each other—the one becomes the other's self; they have the same aims and objects, they are often surprised to find that they have thought the same thought, and are about to say the same words at the same moment. So do the saint and the Saviour grow

like each other after years of acquaintance, only the growth is all on one side—we grow up unto him in all things who is the head. Oh that our likeness to Christ were as clear and complete as our likeness to our dear companions below. You see how love is thus nurtured in the soul by a growing likeness of disposition. Wherever there is congeniality of taste, and mind, and view, and disposition, and spirit, love becomes strong and well established; and thus faith, by begetting in us likeness to Christ, causes love to Christ to become a mighty power in the soul.

Surely all these points sufficiently show that faith creates love in the soul wherever it really dwells. Do not, I pray you, begin to say, "I am afraid I do not love the Lord as I ought," and so on. Take it for granted that you do not love him to the full of his infinite deserts, and instead of raising questions about the degree of your love, ask yourself whether you believe in him? Are you trusting in the Lord Jesus? Are you confiding in him? Because if the root is there the flower will appear ere long. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ thou art born of God, and all who are born of the God of love must themselves love God. Do not talk of trying to love God. You cannot force yourself to love anybody: who in his senses would ever dream of such a thing? Such attempts would be utter folly. Love must be free-born, it cannot be bought or forced. We cannot tell what love is though we feel it. It is a mysterious something, not to be described by the cold maker of definitions; but it is always a product of something else which goes before it. If you believe you will love, if you do not believe you will never love till you do believe. Go to the root of the matter. Do not try to grow the hyacinth of love without the bulb of faith. Do you trust Jesus with all your heart, and are you confiding your soul's eternal interests with him? Then I know that you love him, though you may for awhile be occupied with other pursuits. Love slumbers in you like fire in a flint, or rather, it smoulders like fire in smouldering turf, but ere long it will burn vehemently, like coals of juniper. Look well to your faith and your love will not fail. Remember the lines of a sweet poet, and pray that you may sing them out of your own soul:—

"Hallelujah! I believe!
Now, O Love! I know thy power,
Thine no false or fragile fetters,
Not the rose-wreaths of an hour.

Christian bonds of holy union
Death itself does not destroy;
Yes, to live and love for ever,
Is our heritage of joy."

II. Let me now enlarge upon a second remark: LOVE IS ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON FAITH. "Faith which worketh by love." Love, then, does not work of itself, except in the strength of faith. Love is so entirely dependent upon faith that, as I have already said, *it cannot exist without it.* No man loves a Saviour in whom he reposes no confidence. There may be an admiration of the character of Christ, but the emotion which the Scripture treats as "love" only comes into the heart when we trust in Jesus. "We love him because he first loved us." When

we have a belief in his love, and a sense of it, then we begin to love Jesus, but love to Jesus cannot exist without faith in him.

Certainly *love cannot flourish except as faith flourishes*. If you doubt your Lord you will think hard thoughts of him, and cease to love him as you should. If you fall into trouble, and you doubt his wisdom, or his goodness in sending it, the next thing will be that your heart will be cold towards him; you will begin to think your Lord to be tyrannical and harsh to you, and you will quarrel with him. The two graces must diminish or increase together. If you attain to a simple, childlike confidence, which rests in Christ as a babe on its mother's bosom reposes entirely in her care, then shall your love be made perfect. But because you want to trust yourself a little, and you begin judging your God, and do not repose entirely in him, therefore it is that you have to ask yourself whether you love him or no. May God the Holy Ghost work in us a mighty strength of faith that we may have a vehement love, strong as death, immortal as divinity.

Love, again, as it cannot flourish without faith, so *it cannot work without it*. Love is a great designer and planner, but how to perform it finds not unless faith shows the way. Love sits down and says, "I would the world were converted to Christ!" but faith goes out and preaches the gospel. Love cries, "I would to God that the children knew of Jesus, and that their hearts were renewed even while they are yet little"; but faith opens the Sunday-school and teaches the young, and trusts in God that he will bless the word to their salvation. Love must have faith to give it muscle, sinew, and strength, therefore take right good care of your faith. Longfellow says, "Therefore love and believe, and works will follow spontaneous, even as the day the sun."

Love is as Solomon's lily, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. How fair to look upon! Stand and admire its charms. Know, O gazer, that yon lovely flower could not be thus arrayed were it not joined by its stalk to a living root which is hidden underground. Faith is the needful bulb out of which cometh love as the perfection of beauty. You look over the fair city of Mansoul, and you see a gilded dome glittering in the sun—that dome is love, and it rests upon foundations of faith which are laid deep upon the rock, else would the dome fall in ruins. Love to God, if it be worthy of the name, must be soundly based on confidence in Jesus; it cannot abide without it, but is carried away by wind and flood, like the house on the sand. Hence we are disposed to judge with prudence the outbursts of emotion which we see in certain excitable persons. We hear them sing, "Oh, yes, I do love Jesus," but we are not so sure of it when we watch their lives. We are pleased with such emotions if they arise out of the knowledge of Christ and genuine faith in him, but we have too often seen the semblance of ardent affection without knowledge and without humility, without penitence and without childlike faith, and therefore we rejoice with trembling. We fear lest the building which rises up in a night should vanish, like "the baseless fabric of a vision," and disappear like the soap bubble of a child, which, though it be adorned with all the colours of the rainbow, dissolves in an instant. See, then, to your faith, since love is entirely dependent upon it. See that you are rooted, and grounded, and settled, lest the high tower of professed love should soon lie in ruins, and indifference alone remain.

III. Thirdly, I advance to another observation which comes more closely home to the text, though our previous thoughts have been needful to bring us up to it,—FAITH DISPLAYS ITS POWER BY LOVE. "Faith which worketh by love." For a moment you must permit me to compare faith to an artificer in metals who is about to prepare some work of fine art, such as cunning smiths were wont to produce in the days of wrought iron, when skill and hand-labour were thought much of, and articles were produced which are almost worth their weight in silver. Faith, as a smith, strong and vigorous, has love to be *its arm*. Faith lifts not a finger without love, it is her arm every morning. Faith believes and resolves, and then it proceeds to action, but the power with which it can work lies in love. Faith without love would be a cripple without arms. More than this: it is not only faith's arm but *its tools*. "Faith worketh by love." This is faith's hammer, and file, and anvil, —its every implement. You have seen a screw hammer which can be made to fit every nut and bolt, however large or small: love is just such a tool, for love will teach a little child, or evangelize a nation. Love can stand and burn at the stake, or it can drop two mites that make a farthing into the offering-box. Love hopeth all things, endureth all things: nothing comes amiss to it. A wonderfully handy tool is this sacred grace which faith has adopted to work with; it can strike and it can cut, it is good for uniting and good for breaking, it will avail for anything which faith wishes to perform. Only let faith wield love as its instrument, and it can fashion whatsoever divine wisdom telleth it to form.

More than that, love is faith's *furnace*. All the tools in the world will not suffice the smith unless he can blow the coals and create a fervent heat. What is there, brethren, that can kindle the heat of enthusiasm like earnest love to God? Faith believeth God, and rejoiceth in God; then comes in love, and the heart grows hot as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The melting fire burns right gloriously, and sparks of joy leap upward therefrom. What is there that cannot be performed if we have love enough? This is the great fire which burns in human hearts when God the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of Jesus there: by its heat all things are fused. This fire will yet consume all sin and melt all hardness: none can quench it, everything must yield before it. That consecrated artificer called faith bloweth the coals of love, and plunged into its glowing flame tasks hard as iron become easily workable. Thus, "Faith worketh by love."

Love is more than this, for, when all is melted and ready to flow, love is faith's *mould;* it pours out all it does into the mould of God's love, fashioning its works according to the divine pattern of love in Christ Jesus. As Jesus loved us, even so would we love one another; and as he loved the Father, and for love of the Father, that he might glorify him, fulfilled the law and made himself a sacrifice, even so are we willing to lay down our lives for the brethren and for the Father's honour. Thus love becomes faith's mould, into which it carefully seeks to pour out its whole being.

What is more, it is faith's *metal*, for into the mould of love faith pours love itself. Love thus "answereth all things." Love is the substance [redacted] every good work. Melt it down in the fining pot, and holiness is love.

If there be any virtue, zeal, consecration, or holy daring its substance is love. All the grand deeds which the heroes of the cross have performed are composed of the solid metal of love to Jesus Christ. Be it great or be it little, he who hath served God aright hath ever brought into the sanctuary an offering of pure love comparable to the gold of Ophir.

Love, also, is faith's *burnisher* and file, and with it she finisheth all her work right carefully. Have you never lovingly gone over all your work to give it the finishing touches? Have you not wished to perfect all that you have attempted? I know well what it means. My rough castings, how very coarse they are, and when I fix them I look at them and say, "That will not do, for I see self there; that will not do, unbelief is there; this will not do, too much of self-will is there"; and then I have with tearful love filed down and polished my poor efforts, and found love to be an excellent burnisher, ready to my hand. When Augustine went over all his works to write his Retractations, it was love removing roughnesses from her work; if we loved more we might have more of retractation work to do.

Thus faith works by love: love is faith's arm, faith's tools, faith's furnace, faith's metal, faith's mould, and faith's burnisher. My hearer, if you are working for God in any other way than this you will make a mess of it. The law can never help you to such work as God will accept; it is fitted to produce bars for a prison but not pillars for a temple. You must work for God because you love him; no other labour except the labour of love can be acceptable with him. Some people serve God because they are in religious society, and they must not be thought wanting; hence that blessed guinea, squeezed out by all the ten pound subscriptions on the list at the top of it:—respectable people must put down something, you know. That occasional going out to week-night services is often done because it is expected of you, and not because it is a delight. Even Sabbath assemblies grow to be a weariness, and worship is regarded as a task. This is not gold, but gilded dross: take it away! This is forced service, devoid of the life-blood of obedience; fruit without flavour or scent. That which is done because a man loves God, because he loves to yield his heart to his God, however humble the service may be, is accepted of God. True affection to him who redeemed you from going down to the pit never fails to present an acceptable tribute before the living God. May you abound in this to your own comfort and to the glory of Christ.

IV. I close with the fourth remark, which is this, LOVE RE-ACTS UPON FAITH AND PERFECTS IT. For while love owes everything to faith, faith by-and-by becomes a debtor to love. Love *leads the soul into admiration*, and so increases faith. Having loved Christ, having become enamoured of him, love, that hath dove's eyes which can see everything that is fair, spieth out daily more and more of Christ's perfections, and thus she aids the eye of faith. Love sees among the rest of the Lord's perfections his power, his faithfulness, his immutability; and faith at once concludes, "then I can trust him more than ever." Knowing more of his power, more of his faithfulness, more of his unchangeableness, I can depend upon him without wavering. So if faith's eyes first look to Jesus, love's eyes see yet more, and discover further

excellences. Faith is that other disciple which did outrun Peter, but love is the disciple which enters in and spies out details.

Love, moreover, *forbids unbelief*, and so helps faith, for love says, "How can we grieve him by doubts?" Does not true love in every heart, when exercised towards a man or a woman, forbid distrust? Fear in the form of distrust hath torment, and therefore love casts it out. The want of mutual confidence in married life is the death of love, but love is instinctively tender of showing anything like suspicion towards a dear and faithful lover. Even when it supposes that there is an error, love puts it down as by no means a wilful fault, but concludes that there may be a sense in which it is right, for love believeth all things, endureth all things, and will not tolerate mistrust, which it knows to be a worm at the very core of the heart. So you see where there is great love of Christ it forbids doubt, and thus kills the foxes of distrust which spoil the tender vines of faith.

Love to Jesus feels that it were better to distrust all men and angels than doubt the dear Redeemer who poured out his blood to prove his love. Distrust the heavens, for they shall pass away; distrust the earth, for it shall be utterly burned up; distrust man, for he is as a broken reed; but never distrust the faithful God; lean on him with your whole weight, repose in him with your undivided confidence. So love teaches, and faith learns her lesson.

Moreover, *perfect love casteth out fear*, because fear hath torment, and when perfect love has cast out fear, then faith has room to display its strength. Love has not learned to be afraid, nor will she permit the work of faith to become the labour of a shrinking, crouching slave. Dread! Where can that find a lodging in the heart that loves? You hear very proper people sometimes cry out against certain of us because they say we speak as if we were on the best of terms with God, and were familiar with the Lord Jesus. Sarcastically they speak what is soberly true; in their blindness they have hit the truth: it is even so. To them God is a stranger, and I doubt not that the language which we use may well seem to them strange and almost profane, and it would be profane if *they* were to use it, being what they are. I do not accuse them of open sin, but I do say and will say, that he who is not a child of God cannot fitly use expressions which are most becoming from the lips of those who are the sons of God. A child may say to his father what no one else may dare to say, and yet he has more reverence for him than anyone else. Your child shall rightly behave towards you in a manner which you could not tolerate in a stranger. Look at the judge on the bench, with that big wig, and those solemn robes; the prisoner at the bar, and the court and the jury must all be very respectful and distant, but I warrant you when his lordship reaches home his grandchild has no dread of grandpapa or his robes. Love gives boldness, and is yet most reverent: reverently

familiar. Chilliness and coldness are not for the children of God; they are called to close intercourse with their heavenly Father, and the meeting place is not at Sinai, but at Calvary. Faith and love are home-living children, and not out-of-door pensioners; they dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Oh beloved, this is the joy of love, that it brings us into such close personal intercourse with God in Jesus Christ that trembling, slavish fear is gone, and loving God we are familiar with him, and trust him implicitly. Oh, dear friends, trust your God with every thing, trust him in little things, trust him in great things; trust him in your joys to keep you sober, trust him in your sorrows to keep you from despair. Oh, that you may possess much of this love, for it is an eminent grace. "Faith is child-like," says Dr. Eadie; "hope is saint-like, but love is God-like." May we reach this God-like virtue through faith in God himself.

My final word is this: let us, dear friends, as a church and people be working people. Faith works; let us work because we have faith. I wish that every member of this church were at work for Jesus. I have very little to complain of, because I do believe that the major part of the dear brethren and sisters associated here are hard at it; but if there are any of you who are not serving the Lord, I pray you bestir yourselves. You must work, or your faith will be questioned, and your love will be suspected. We are a hive of bees, but what will happen if instead of making honey the workers all turn to drones? Why, they will next turn to wasps. If such a change cannot take place in nature it certainly does occur in morals and spirituals, for we have seen companies of good hard-working Christians suddenly break out into factions and quarrel furiously. When bees turn to wasps there is nothing but fighting. May our good Lord save us from such a calamity. I do not mind being like the queen bee in the hive, king of the bees, but a leader of wasps I cannot be. Dear friends, do get to work for the Master: you, I mean, who stand all the day idle. Go work to-day in the Saviour's vineyard. Oh, my beloved brethren, I beseech you do not relax your energies. Continue to be a lively, energetic church. Now that so many Sunday-schools need teachers, I charge our friends not to let that blessed part of the service flag. Here are dozens of schools crying out for teachers. The children come and there are none to instruct them. Should it be so?

If you are to be a working church you must be a loving church, because faith works by love. You must love one another much, and love Christ more, and love the souls of perishing sinners; yes, love them so that you will not let them perish if you can do anything towards their salvation. Personal doing of good to men is needed if love is to be real. The love of Jesus made him seek and save the lost, and if ours be worth the name we shall be engaged in the like holy endeavour.

But if you are to be a working church and a loving church you must

be a believing church, for that is the bottom of it all. Faith works by love. Get home, then, to prayer, and renew your faith in Jesus. May the Holy Ghost lead you anew to the dying love of Jesus. I often go straight away back to the cross from which I started when I set out for heaven. The devil says to me, "You are no Christian." I do not think he knows much about it, but I have before now tried to show him some evidences that I am a Christian, and he has only puffed at them. I find the short way is to go right away to the cross and say, "I rest on Jesus only." Satan cannot deny but what you are a Christian when you stand there. Go and do your first works, and believe in Jesus just as you did at the first, and abide in him evermore. As sinners, cling to Jesus still, and let him be everything to you. Constant faith will create fervent love, and fervent love will do persevering work; so shall we be a people zealous for good works. The Lord bless every one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 229, 195.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

By C. H. SPURGEON.

"While brimful of humour it at the same time overflows with wisdom on things temporal as well as spiritual. It is as witty, humorous, and mirthful as *Punch*, and has the wisdom of Solomon. . . . . Homely truths are spoken in homely fashion, in simple, strong, sturdy Saxon. . . . . Few will be able to glance at the woodcuts —every one of which provokes a laugh—or read the quaint titles of the different pieces, all of which are brimful of wisdom, not seldom spiced with sarcasm, without being led to read John Ploughman's sage and savory remarks. . . . . Youth and age, rich and poor, cultured and uncultured will relish it, and be the better for reading it."—*Kelso Chronicle.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REDEMPTION BY PRICE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 22ND, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price."—1 Corinthians vi. 19, 20.

ATTACKS have often been made upon the central doctrine of the gospel, namely, the doctrine of redemption or atonement, for it is well known to be the Redan of the gospel. These onslaughts have in many instances been very craftily made; they have professed to be mere corrections of our phraseology, but were essentially assaults upon the truth itself. We believe that in and through the blood of Jesus we have redemption, and that we have been ransomed from destruction by the Mediator's death, the Lord Jesus having bought us by the suit and service which he rendered in our place and stead. When we speak very plainly upon this point certain pretentious divines, whose custom it is to sneer at the old theology, at once raise objections to what they are pleased to call "the mercantile theory of atonement." With weak minds an ugly phrase stands for argument, but in this case there is really nothing horrible in the description, even if it be allowed all its force. There may have been among us certain persons who carried ideas of the shop and the counter into their notion of redemption, but we maintain that even these were nearer the truth than those who reduce the ransom paid by the Lord Jesus to nothing, and make his redemption a meaningless figure of speech. Within the idea of purchase lies hidden the essence of the Saviour's work, and therefore it is to be adhered to. He is coming yet again to complete the redemption of the purchased possession, and we shall not forego our hope to please the squeamish. Paul, at any rate, was not afraid of the mercantile theory, if so men please to call it, for he writes, "Ye are bought," yea, to make it still more sure he puts it, "bought with a price." This is put very strongly, and there is no planing it down. If it means anything it must mean that a price was paid for us; instead of our being for ever captives under bondage and death, a ransom has been found, according to that ancient saying, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." The song of heaven is no idle rhapsody. Hark, how they chant the solemn hymn before the throne of God and the Lamb, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast

redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Was it not said of him while he was here below, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." There was a substitutionary sacrifice presented on the behalf of his people by Jesus Christ, who thus redeemed his chosen from their lost estate. This was a matter of fact, and an efficacious action, actually ransoming those who were redeemed. We do not believe in a cloudy, phantom-like atonement, which did something or nothing, and was a mere exhibition without results; but we believe that Jesus did actually redeem his people by a ransom, which ransom was his suffering and death in their stead, by which the justice of God was satisfied and his law was honoured. If there were no other text in Scripture the one which is now before us would abundantly justify us in using those very expressions which have been ridiculed as mercantile—"Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price." Though we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, yet the transaction was none the less real and effective. An equivalent was given, a possession was secured. The fact is, the objection is not merely to the mercantile expression: the objection is to the very idea of substitution and vicarious sacrifice. The pretence is that mistaken words are criticised, but it is a mere pretence; the gun is aimed at Christ's bearing divine wrath in our stead—this is the doctrine which they cannot endure. They will have to aim very often, and burst their cannon before they will be able to destroy our belief in the truth of substitution while we have the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah remaining in the inspired volume, and other passages of sacred Scripture to the like effect. Even if they could disprove the doctrine of vicarious suffering, and show that substitution is an ignorant fancy, the best thing they could do would be to wring their hands in agony, because they had blotted out the brightest star that ever shone amid the storm-wrack of a tempestuous conscience. No truth within the circle of theology is so eminently consolatory to souls burdened with sin as the great fact that Jesus Christ bare the sins of many and carried away on his own shoulders the transgressions of his people. Let others believe or disbelieve, I nail my colours to the cross where Jesus my Lord paid his blood as a price for me.

It is a high honour to our poor fallen race that man is the only redeemed creature in the universe; he alone has cost the Lord his life. Rebellious angels kept not their first estate, but they are left to their doom; no price has ever been paid for them: other angels, sustained by God's power, still keep their high position in his sacred courts, but they are not redeemed by blood. In them there is an exhibition of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, but there is no display of free grace and dying love. Man stands in this respect alone; nowhere else is the blood-mark—the blood-mark of the Son of God. We alone are the flock of God which he hath redeemed with his own blood. Hence man cost God more than the whole universe beside. The Lord could speak worlds into existence, he could mould ponderous orbs as one rolls clay between his palms, or create constellations as the smith smiteth off sparks from the anvil; but to erect the new creation of redeemed men God must endure the loss of his own Son, resign his beloved to death,

and in the person of the Only Begotten he must ransom men by his own sufferings. I may not venture now to describe the agonies of the incarnate God, but all these were needful to redeem man. The Lord has given more than Ethiopia or Seba for us, for he has given himself. Think of yourself, my dear friend, then (if, indeed, you have believed in Christ), as being a singularity in the realm of beings, a special wonder in the creation. You alone can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Neither in the earth nor in the stars, however they may be peopled, nor in yonder golden streets, are there any beings save men who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. We are the costliest of creatures; dearest to God, for he has spent most upon us, and made us the choicest objects of his heavenly expenditure.

This work of redemption is a very marvellous one; for the more one tries to study it the more its many-sidedness appears. In what respects and under what aspects have we been ransomed? Time would fail me to recount them all. We have been redeemed, we know, in reference to divine justice. We had violated God's law, and therefore there was a punishment to be exacted from us; this punishment the Lord Jesus has endured in our place. "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

We are justified, or reckoned as just, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Our great Redeemer has done for the honour of the law more than all of us put together could have done, and this stands as a ransom for us, so that now we may go free because he has suffered in our stead whatever was due from us to the law of God. This is a blessed aspect of redemption, and one which we hope always to keep prominent in our thoughts, and in our teaching. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." May the Holy Spirit teach us to value this great redemption!

Furthermore, we are redeemed from the power of evil, even as the Holy Ghost saith in the epistle to Titus, "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This redemption may be said to be not so much redemption by price as by power, yet even in this there are signs of price, for the apostle says, "he gave himself for us." It is true that no price was paid to Satan, that is not to be imagined for an instant; we were never the devil's rightful possession, and therefore he is compelled to let go his captives not for price or reward. We have been brought out from under the power of evil even as Israel was brought out from under the tyranny of Pharaoh. No redemption money was paid to the Egyptian king, but the Lord redeemed his people with a high hand and a stretched out arm: it was a case of redemption by power, and yet that smear of blood made by the hyssop on the lintel and the two side posts still indicated that price went hand in hand with power, and the blood of atonement was needed as well as the rod of omnipotence. In our deliverance from evil it is not alone by the power of the Holy Ghost that we are delivered, but he applies the blood as a cleansing power. The Lord Jesus is "made unto us sanctification and

redemption." Of those who conquer sin and Satan it is said, "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb." Grace breaks the yoke from off the neck of the believer, but the finger of delivering grace is dipped in blood, and leaves redemption's token wherever it comes. Do you not see it? Know ye not that henceforth ye are not your own, the price paid in Gethsemane and Calvary has set you apart?

Another phase of this redemption which we do not often think of seems to me to be suggested by the text. There was a time, brethren, when we thought ourselves to be our own. Now, saith my text, "Ye are not your own." "Why?" "Because ye are 'bought with a price.'" Bought from whom? May I not fairly say that, in one sense, ye were bought from yourselves? Where else is the force of the expression, "Ye are not your own." Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus a compensation has been given to you for yourselves, so that your rights to yourselves are now the property of your Lord Jesus. That independence and liberty which once you delighted in is now surrendered. You said, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us? Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? As for us, we will be free, and do according to our own wills:" but the matchless ransom has been paid, and henceforth all idea of self-will and self-indulgence are trespasses upon the enclosed possession of the Redeemer. Our vested interest in ourselves, though it never was a true property at all, is once for all surrendered to him who has laid down his life for us. We have received at the Lord's hands a thousandfold for all that we hand over to him: the price is so great, so altogether beyond all computation, that we gladly yield our unworthy selves to be the Lord's for ever and ever. I shall want you to remember this form of redemption, and to that end I will set it first among the points to which I shall call your attention.

Dear brethren, let us try at this time to feel the force of the truth that we are bought with a price, and are not our own, for it must not remain a dead letter, it ought to affect our hearts and influence our lives. I shall try to set it forth to you in a series of contrasts, which I may compare to the double glasses of a stereoscope: they will, I trust, aid you in seeing more clearly and feeling more forcibly. We can never be too much affected by this important practical truth. O that the Spirit of God would press it home upon our hearts and consciences!

I. First, I see in the text COMPENSATION, AND YET GAIN. Compensation is intended to make good a loss, but in our case the transfer of ourselves from self to Christ is a clear gain. *Compensation*, then, first—"Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price." You have surrendered as believers your right and property in yourselves. Have you made a good bargain? Assuredly you have; for, first of all, you live, and had you retained your supposed right to yourself you would have died. He that saveth his life in such a sense, by keeping it to himself, shall lose it. You were, in fact, already dead while you lived, because you were living in pleasure, and finding that pleasure in yourself; but now the Lord has given you a new, high, noble, divine life. Is not that a compensation indeed for giving up the grovelling life of the flesh? He has given you in addition to life peace: you are now at rest in Jesus. As a believer you know that your sins are forgiven you for Christ's name's sake, that

the Father himself loveth you, that you are accepted in the Beloved, and safe in Jesus's hands. You enjoy great peace; deep, lasting, ever-flowing. Is it not much better to have peace and to be Christ's than to be like the troubled sea that cannot rest and belong to yourself? One drop of sacred peace is an abundant recompense for the yielding up of yourself to Jesus. In addition to peace you have joy. Sometimes when it is at flood your happiness is as much as you can bear: you know what it is to be carried off your feet by a whirlwind of intense delight when you are musing upon your Lord and his love to you, and the price paid to win you. Oh! the joy, the unutterable blessedness which is the fruit of the Spirit! What delights grow on the bitter tree, the cross! No clusters of the vine can equal the fruit of Calvary's cross. I am sure that whatever earthly joys you have given up you are abundantly compensated for them all by the joy you find in the purchase-price which Christ Jesus gave for you. And then you have a grand reversion; a hope which looks across the stream of death to a better land; a hope of immortality with Christ, of likeness to him, and association with him, and glory with him for ever. Why, my friend, if there had been a kingdom to renounce, if there had been a world of self-denials, and ten thousand pleasant things to be given up, you might have been well content to be repaid by such a price. You have received for your little the fulness which is in Christ, who is all in all: yea, the polluting joys, the dangerous independence, the rebellious indulgences of sin at their best, and all put together, are not worthy to be compared with the matchless endowments which your Redeemer has bestowed upon you. To-day you possess all that the blood of Jesus confers and effects, and I cannot in a few words tell you the whole of that treasury of grace. The price which Jesus paid means cleansing: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Is it not better to be cleansed, and to be the Lord's, than to be filthy and be your own? The blood of Jesus brings us near to God, for we are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Is it not better to be near to the Lord, and belong to Jesus, than to be in the far-off country with the swine and the husks, and be your own? The blood has spoken peace: it "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Is it not better to be God's, and hear the blood cry "Peace," than to be your own, and to hear a terrible sound in your ears of judgment to come? The blood has given you entrance into the most holy place, even into the very heart of God; and is it not better to be the Lord's beloved, and to come close to him and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend, than to be your own, and to be shut out from God, and from the glory of his presence? Until the blood is sprinkled no man may dare to approach the thrice holy God, but that once done we have access with boldness; is not this a joy? If any complain that a Christian's life is a life of self-denial, as indeed sometimes it is, yet the compensations are incalculably rich, for in the blood of Jesus we have had given to us ten thousand times over and above all that we ever lost for Christ's sake. So far compensation.

But then we must not forget that the supposed loss is an actual *gain*. It is a fine business when a man is compensated for a loss, and yet the loss itself becomes an advantage to him; yet most emphatically this has been our case; for aught that we have lost for Christ's sake we may truly

count as clear gain. We have only lost that which dishonoured, injured, and enslaved us. Blessed loss! What were we without Christ? We were the slaves of self; but if set free from self, we are indeed set free from a worse than Egyptian bondage, whose wage is death. It was inevitable that we must have some master or other, but all our former masters were tyrants. Now, brethren, we are set free from Satan, and is not that a gain to be delivered from the prince of the power of the air? Once we served the world and it was our lord, but what gain it is to feel that we are no longer the servants of men because we are bought with a price. Instead of needing that aught should be given to us as a recompense for self-surrender, we can reply—We find our joy and our delight in being altogether Christ's, and the very height of our ambition is that by-and-by we may live entirely according to the will of God. Oh, that this much desired were fully come, for we shall never know perfect liberty until we reach that lofty degree, and then we shall be ready to step into the glory. The Lord help us in it.

So much then on the first point:—the Lord Jesus has by his blood given us compensation, and yet there never was a loss, but an unspeakable gain.

II. Look at the text again, and you will see in it HIGH VALUE AND YET LOWLINESS:—"Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price." *Value* is clearly here, for we are bought with an immense price. How great a store ought man to set by himself as before God, for he is a purchased possession. God thinks not lightly of man, but esteems him sufficiently in divine condescension to buy him with the richest price conceivable. He lost the angels and would not pay a penny for them, but when man had fallen he laid down his life to ransom him. You, my dear friend, should have the very lowliest view of yourself, but yet do see how God has exalted you! "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, O God? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Yet he does visit him. He has visited him so as to take his nature into union with the divine. More than that, he visited him so as to redeem him with pangs and anguish unutterable. If you want to know the value of yourself see Christ upon the cross, and mark his wounds. You are not a thing to be trifled with. Do not reckon so cheaply of yourself as to stoop to become a mere money-grubber or earthworm. You are worth more than that. Do not fancy that you ever can truly be yourself while you are living for any human object or any earthly aim: you are too precious to waste yourself on fading flowers. You are a being of God's making, in the first place. In his own image, remember, he made you, and nothing but sin could spoil you: but now you have been bought, and therefore have become a costly thing, more costly than a mere creation. In the Lord's house you are not a vessel to dishonour, a broken crock to be flung on the dunghill and another obtained in your place; but you are a vessel unto honour fit for the Master's use, since he has paid for you so dearly. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." There is a sanctity about a blood-bought man or woman of the highest degree: the Lord has purchased him with his life. A sanctity surrounds even these frail bodies, for the apostle is speaking about them

in the text now before us. Let me read what he says upon them—"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Never, therefore, give up your body to idleness, drunkenness, or any form of uncleanness. Paul speaks especially of fornication as a thing not to be thought of among the saints; because the body has been valued by God at a great price, and purchased accordingly, and must not therefore be defiled by an impure conversation. Though Paul in another sense called it a "vile body," yet it cannot be vile in all respects, for even now it is a sacred thing, the shrine of the eternal Spirit. We ought to value the very dust of the departed saint. It little matters what becomes of a dead body, yet would I have it laid reverently in its last resting-place, and let its bones be undisturbed until the trump of the archangel shall sound, for every atom of a believer's body has been redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ, as well as his soul and spirit; yea, his entire manhood has been purchased by Christ Jesus. I want you, then, to think of yourselves, you believers, as precious things. The Lord says to each one of his own beloved, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." You are "the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold." Use yourselves only for honourable purposes, for God puts honour upon you.

Now look at the other side of the picture; you are precious, but you must yet be *lowly*, for whatever value there is about you, you do not belong to yourself. "Ye are not your own." Though precious enough to have been bought with a price, yet none of the preciousness is yours. Believers, you are the goods and chattels of Christ: as you were once sold under sin, so are you now "bought with a price." We have done with slavery of men, I hope, though in a few countries it ignominiously lingers as a crime on which society has laid its ban; but the blessed bondage of belonging to Christ, I pray that it may be extended all over the world. "I bear in my body," said Paul, "the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if he had been branded with Christ's name, as sheep and cattle often bear the mark of their owner. I think he alluded to the scars which had been left by the scourges, or perhaps to the water-mark of baptism which he had received in his entire body, in which some of us greatly rejoice, because it is the reminder of our being dead with Christ, and buried with him. Never can the fact of our immersion into the sacred name be reversed; once only, and that to last for ever, are we buried with Christ in baptism unto death. Into his name have we been plunged, that we may be his for ever, and no more our own. A man cannot be proud of himself, however he knows his value, when he perceives that not a hair on his head or a finger of his hand belongs to himself. In true Christian life not a pulse beats for ourselves, not a breath is breathed for ourselves, not a single part of the complex machinery of our body or of our mind or soul remains our own; we are to use all for Christ, for we are bought and sold properties, taken right away from ourselves and owned by Christ by an everlasting tenure as "a purchased possession." I wish I could get into the mind of all here the thought which burdens my own heart, that we should esteem ourselves as blood-bought men, as being sacred things, as holy as the golden candlestick, or as the golden table of the shew-bread, and yet think of

ourselves as being the very least and lowest in the Lord's house, because we are not at all our own. Our honour lies in our owner. God forbid that we should glory in anything except that we belong to Christ. Paul cried, "Whose I am, and whom I serve;" and this we too will say with hearty exultation. We will walk with holy boldness as the Lord's own, but yet with deep humility as not our own.

III. Thoughtfully let us consider another contrast: "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price:" this brings before my mind SECURITY AND YET WATCHFULNESS. First, *security*. You will not be lost, for he who owns you is able to keep you. If you were to perish, who would be the loser? Why, he to whom you belong, and "ye are not your own," ye belong to Christ. My hope of being preserved to the end lies in this fact, that Jesus Christ paid far too much for me ever to let me go. Each believer cost him his heart's blood. Stand in Gethsemane, and hear his groans: then draw near and mark his bloody sweat, and tell me, will he lose a soul for whom he suffered thus? See him hanging on the tree, tortured, mocked, burdened with an awful load, and then beclouded with the eclipse of his Father's face, and do you think he suffered all that and yet will permit those for whom he endured it to be cast into hell? He will be a greater loser than I shall if I perish, for he will lose what cost him his life: surely he will never do that. Here is your security, you are the Lord's portion, and he will not be robbed of his heritage. We are in a hand that bears the scar of the nail; we are hidden in the cleft of a rock—a rock that was riven for us near nineteen hundred years ago. None can pluck us from the hand which redeemed us; its pressure is too warm with love and strong with might for that.

Now turn the picture over: look at the other side of the medal. Here is reason for *watchfulness*. "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price," therefore take great care of yourselves, and keep your hearts with all diligence, for you are a king's treasure. If a thing is my own I may do what I like with it, but if it is entrusted to my care I must mind how I behave towards it, or else I shall be an unfaithful steward. Come, come, friend, you may play with yourself if you like if you are your own, but if you belong to Jesus Christ, I charge you by the love you bear him, and by the dignity of his sacred character, and by his death,—the price he gave for you—do not pollute or degrade yourself. You are not your own, therefore permit no damage to come to your Lord's estate lest he call you to account. The prodigal away in the far country may live just as he likes if he is his own, for the citizens of that country and their swine care nothing how he behaves. Poor wretch that he is; he may destroy himself if he wills; on his own head shall come the loss, nobody will grieve over a rake and a spendthrift. But you and I are not in that condition; we have been brought home, and are our father's own children, and we must behave ourselves according to the law of his house, and please him in all things. We have no rights of property in ourselves now that Christ hath purchased us, and it is our bounden duty to act towards ourselves as husbandmen act towards a vineyard, the fruits of which are not to be eaten by themselves, but by their lord. Let us preserve each cluster of the heart's vine for the King to whom it belongs, and trim each walk and train each flower

of the soul's garden according to his pleasure. See ye to it then, that ye waste not and spoil not the royal estate. Ye are safe in the Lord's hands, therefore rejoice; but mind ye take the other side of the truth, and watch so as to keep your garments white, by walking close to God, for "ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price."

IV. A fourth contrast, well worthy to be worked out in your private meditations, is CONSECRATION AND YET PERFECT LIBERTY. "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price,"—there is *consecration*. You are to-day to dedicate yourself wholly and entirely to the Lord, because you are not partly redeemed, but wholly redeemed. Do you make any provision for the flesh, dear friend? Do you keep back any faculty you possess from Christ? Is not this a robbery of your Lord? How would you like to think of that particular reservation as being unredeemed? Would you be content to believe that no blood of Christ has ever fallen to redeem that part of you? Which portion is it which is to be unconsecrated? Is it the body that you would pamper and indulge? What, have you an unredeemed body then? Are you satisfied that it should be eaten of the worm, and never rise from the dust? or do you give to Christ your loving heart, but reserve your thinking mind to yourself, and say, "I will invent my own beliefs, and not yield my judgment to the dicta of revelation"? What, my friend, have you then an unredeemed intellect? What is to become of it in that day when only those things shall be gathered into heaven which have been bought with blood, and owned by Christ? In that day when he maketh up his jewels he will not put another man's goods among them. Do not reserve from Christ even your second-class powers. Withhold not your voice, but sing for Jesus, or speak for him, if you can; write for Jesus, paint for Jesus, ay, make and mend garments for his sake. Do not reserve from Christ any minor power that you possess, but ask God to enable you to consecrate the skill of your fingers to him as well as the force of your arm, for even your least members are bought with a price. Your time is included in the purchase, for there is never a moment when you are unredeemed. Some people think, perhaps, that they are off duty now and then; let me ask them, Are you ever off the roll of redemption? Is there one St. Monday in the week in which you are an unredeemed man, and may be your own or the devil's? Suppose you die that day? What then?

As this consecration holds good for all times, so in all manner of ways. You are consecrated to Christ to do whatever you can do to his glory; to suffer whatever you can suffer as he lays it upon you, and, above all, to *be* as well as to do and to suffer,—to be for ever the Lord's. There is a great deal in actually being Christ's, even when you are not actively engaged; when you are neither praying, nor singing, nor working, but as it were standing still, it is well to be as the sweet flowers in the garden, which exhale the perfume of their innermost hearts in silent surrender to the passing gales. O that we may be full of grace, and may the wind of the divine Spirit scatter abroad the sweetnesses of our inner life, even when we are scarcely conscious of it.

But, then, there is with this a perfect *liberty*. I do believe that to be consecrated to Christ is, when we come to the bottom of things, the sure way to give to all the faculties of our nature the fullest possible play.

Vice is the indulgence of the passions. True. Therefore some think it joy; but if all the passions of a man of every sort were to be exercised in their right harmony and proportion, as they would have been had he remained in his first estate, then perfect virtue, and not vice, would have been the result, and in that virtue manhood would have found a delightful liberty. The propensities of our nature as nature—not as fallen nature—will have their right indulgence when they own a complete subservience to the will and law of God. Liberty to sin is slavery, liberty from sin is freedom. There is no liberty to a man like that of being under law to God. If we are encased within the compass of the law we are no more restricted than a bird which is imprisoned within the boundless expanse of air, or a fish which is shut in by the ocean. Obedience to Christ is our element. The element of a truly renewed man is holiness, and when you and I shall become perfectly consecrated to Christ, so as to live alone for him, we shall have reached that way of living which God designed us to follow, wherein we shall be perfectly filled with happiness. Do not think, therefore, that the more a Christian you become the more you will feel of restriction and bond; say rather, that you will rejoice in the more of such freedom as good men alone can understand. The fact is that self-denial itself will become no self-denial, but a supreme joy, when once the heart is perfectly loyal to its Lord.

V. To close, I will mention a fifth pair of contrasts:—SUBMISSION AND EXPECTANCY. These are both suggested by my text. *Submission:* "Ye are not your own," and therefore God has a right to do whatever he wills with you. We cannot tell what he may do with us yet, but if we must suffer week after week of pain upon our bed, he has a right to lay us there and chasten us in every limb. If the Lord says, "Go into your room and cough all the winter through, and then melt away with decline," we must bow before his decree, remembering these words, "Ye are not your own." Or if he says, "Come down from your position of comfort into hard work and poverty," again you must remember "ye are not your own." Or if he says, "Migrate across the seas; go to a new country, cut every tie and break the fondest connections," you must cheerfully obey, for "ye are not your own." If the call of duty should be "Go, preach the gospel among the heathen; go and die among them; find a grave where malaria shortens life, or cruelty brings sudden death;" you must go without a question, for "ye are not your own." Ours not to raise questions or debates, for those can only be legitimate among persons who are their own.

> "Ours not to reason why:
> Ours but to dare and die,"

for we are not our own. Submission, absolute submission, is the rightful position of the blood-bought.

Side by side with that comes *expectancy*. I could not do much for myself if I were my own, but if I am Christ's I expect that he will do great things for me. Do you see those two boys? neither can do much for himself, but one of them has great expectations. And why? Because he has a kind and wealthy father, of whom he expects great things. He says, "I am my father's son, and he will take care of me." It is the

same with us, our great Owner's goodness and power have raised our expectations. Look at this body of mine, it must decay, and become mere dust; but my Lord has bought it, and be sure he did not purchase it to let it end in corruption. It is not my own, therefore I feel sure that he who owns it will fit it up again in nobler form than it now wears, and make it bright and glistening like his own, not liable to pain, or sickness, or decay. I know he will. If this body were only mine I should expect there would be an end of it when the grave-digger hides it in the earth; but if it be my Lord's, he has paid so much for it that he must have some grand intention concerning it. He sees in this body the raw material out of which his grace and power can make something that shall glorify himself. Is there not warrant for great expectations in our belonging to Christ?

We are not our own: then these minds of ours,—depend upon it he will enlarge them: he will increase our mental calibre, and make his property more worthy of its owner. You say, dear brother, "I shall never be much of a man; I have but small capacity for learning." Well, what you have belongs to Christ, and he will sanctify your talents and increase them, and give you wisdom to use them for his honour. You do not know what you may yet become. You will know more after you have been in heaven five minutes than all the doctors of divinity on earth; for there you shall know even as you are known. You shall know Christ, and see him and rejoice in him beyond all that you can now conceive. You are not your own, but he who owns you means to make something out of you; he bought you at too great a price to let you run to waste. As for your entire being, rest assured that he intends to reflect his own glory by means of it throughout eternity. I never knew Christ act unwisely yet, and though sometimes it seems to me as though I could have forbidden the cross and his sacrifice, as though his death was too dear a price to redeem such insignificant beings as we are, yet he must have seen in our poor, fallen nature, in its very sin and misery, room for his grace, room for his power, and, therefore, the opportunity for a grand display of his power and love, to the amazement of angels, and principalities, and powers throughout eternity. At any rate, a piece of clay that lies in the pit all its own has no destiny before it, but when it has been purchased by the potter, and beaten and prepared, and when it feels itself revolving on the wheel, it has just reason to believe that it will bear a useful part in time to come. It might say, if it could speak, "I am not my own lump of clay; I have been bought with a great price, and therefore something is to be made of me. It doth not yet appear what I shall be, but when he that fashioneth hath finished me I shall, no doubt, be worthy of the hand that has wrought this upon me." Raise your expectations as high as ever you will, God meaneth to do for you exceeding abundantly above what ye can ask or even think: according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus he will show the exceeding greatness of his power in you that believe in Jesus Christ. Blessed are the men, then, of whom it is true, "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price."

Now, I finish by this question: "Are you your own, dear hearer?" I can imagine some sitting here saying, "Of course I am; I do not believe in surrendering myself to God." Well, then, if you are your own you

will go to your own place, and where your own place is read the word of God and discover. There shall you find that those who know not God shall be driven from his presence: if they are their own they must be their own comforters and their own helpers, but far off from God shall they be driven for evermore.

Are you anxious to be saved, my dear hearer? Then the way of salvation is, that you believe in Jesus Christ: but it is an essential part of that believing that you do surrender yourself to Christ. If he will save you, shall he have you to be his possession? If he will buy you, will you be his? If he will redeem you, will you confess that you are not your own? Many a man is unable to find peace because he wants to be independent, and demands to have his own will and way. Surrender! That is a necessary exhortation to every revolted one who would be restored. Surrender! Surrender at discretion. God cannot treat with rebels while they carry their weapons in their hands. Down with your weapons: cry to him, "Lord, I am dying, starving, perishing; wrath is upon me: only let me live and be cleansed, and I will be thine for ever, as thy grace shall help me to be." He will accept you: he does accept you now if that is the utterance of your heart; and you, too, may go away and sing,

"I am thine, and thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own."

God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—413, 709, 282.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

By C. H. SPURGEON.

"A rich store of topics treated daintily, with broad humour, with quaint good sense, yet always with a subdued tone and high moral aim."—*Oxford Times.*

"It is as witty, humorous, and mirthful as *Punch*, and has the wisdom of the Proverbs of Solomon."—*Kelso Chronicle.*

"This book deserves, and no doubt will meet with, the same popularity as 'John Ploughman's Talk.'"—*Leath Herald.*

"Each sentence is a cluster of diamonds, some of them rough, but all of them real. It is the very quintessence of sanctified common sense. Every page is worth a mint of money."—*The Christian.*

"In the raciest English imaginable the author explains, turns about, developes, and applies to daily circumstances a number of proverbs which are in everybody's mouth."—*The Bookseller.*

"This pleasant mixture of humour and common sense cannot be too widely circulated."—*The Rock.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GLORIES OF FORGIVING GRACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 29TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—Ephesians i. 7.

LAST Sunday morning the subject was redemption, "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." The sequel to redemption is pardon: the text gives us that doctrine, for it tells us that redemption through the blood of Jesus involves the forgiveness of sins. Our subject at this time shall be the forgiveness of sin, the measure, mode, medium, and manifestation of it as set forth in the words before us. May the Holy Spirit sweetly open up to us the glories of our sin-forgiving God, and cause us to exult in the riches of his grace.

Beloved friends, no one can say that we have before us a theme which is unpractical, speculative, and fanciful; no one will be able to charge the preacher with discoursing upon a subject with which his hearers have little or nothing to do, or wandering into barren fancies which cannot affect their actual lives. It is true that some sermons are barely human, and might as well have been addressed to the inhabitants of Jupiter or Saturn as to ourselves; but such shall not be the case with our discourse. We have no hair-lines of metaphysical subtlety before us; our theme runs parallel with the beaten track of everyday life. Sin is, alas, too familiar with us. We have all committed it, the slime of the serpent has been upon us; we are affected by it still, as an adder in the path it biteth at our heels, and it will be our daily trial, like the fiery serpents in the wilderness, till we enter the promised rest. Sin as a thing of the past cannot be forgotten; was there ever a sorer bondage than that with which it made us serve with rigour? Sin as a matter of affliction for the present is not to be ignored: was there ever a sterner fight than we have to wage against evil without and within? Sin as a danger still ahead must not be overlooked: were there ever rocks or quicksands more terrible to the mariner than temptations to sin which yet lie before us on our voyage to heaven? Sin is always around us. Whither shall we hasten to escape from its presence? If in holy communion we climb to Pisgah's top we stumble even in view of Canaan, and slip upon our high places; and if we descend into the lowest deeps, like

David, till all God's waves and billows have gone over us, our despondency and unbelief cause us to sin amid our humiliations. Should I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, unless I could escape from mine own self, even there would sin follow me, and its hand would smite me to my sore wounding. Nothing can be more practical than the doctrine which deals with sin and its removal, and no news can be more pleasant than the tidings of remission. Why, the very sound of that word, "Forgiveness of sins" is a joy for ever; no marriage bell hath more of music in its notes. To the guilty forgiveness is a tone of joy which their jaded ear is able to hear without strain. It ministereth refreshment to the weary heart. High joys and rare delights are apt to send forth raised notes which terrified consciences cannot endure; their very sweetness is sharp and distressing to the sorrowful, and their harmony causes a deeper discord in the broken heart: but forgiveness hath a soft, silver sound, mellow and tender, and when man's ear is stunned with the thunder and the terror of the wrath to come, then he is charmed to listen to its soothing melody. The gentle love-whispers of free grace and dying love, and pardons bought with blood, are as heaven's own sonnets to troubled souls.

It is my earnest desire, dear friends, that many this morning may come to believe in the joyful doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. It is an article in the creed, but I want it to be a substantive in your lives. Most men say that they believe it, but their belief is often nominal, and a nominal faith, like nominal wealth, only makes the absence of the reality the more deplorable. In two instances there is clearly no faith in forgiven sin; and the first is in the case of those who have never felt that they are sinful. How can he who does not believe in the existence of sin believe in the forgiveness of it? His whole confession on that matter belongs to the region of fiction. If sin is not a terrible fact to you, pardon will never be more than a notion.

A second class of persons who do not believe in forgiveness are those who know the guilt of sin but are not yet able to believe in the Lord Jesus for the remission of their transgressions. They need to be admonished as Luther was by the godly old monk. When he was greatly distressed under conviction of his guilt the aged man said, "Didst thou not say this morning in the creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin'?" Luther, like many more, had repeated those words, but had never grasped their meaning. Oh, my dear hearers, do not be theoretical believers. You believe in sin, believe also in its pardon. Let the one be as much a truth as the other. You believe in the punishment of sin in the case of the impenitent, be equally sure of the pardon of sin to believers. You believe in the guilt of your own personal sin, believe also for yourself in the power of Jesus at this moment to blot out all your transgressions, and, lo, they shall vanish as a cloud which is driven before the north wind. Forgiveness in Christ Jesus accepted by faith is now to be enjoyed, and with it perfect rest and peace of heart. God grant it to you at this present moment: then shall my theme be marrow and fatness to you.

According to our text forgiveness of sins is a matter of grace, and yet it is connected with the price paid by our Redeemer. We spoke last Sunday morning of a price being paid, and here the text saith, "In whom we have redemption through his blood:" but the fact of Christ

having paid a price and having satisfied justice does not remove the pardon of sin out of the region of pure grace. Because justice is satisfied we are not therefore to say that mercy is excluded. I cannot at this time go into the details to explain how the facts stand; but so it is according to the word of revelation, that, albeit the salvation of a sinner is conducted upon principles which are as just as his condemnation, yet at the same time the forgiveness of a sinner is an act of gratuitous favour on the part of God. As the giving of Jesus Christ, by whom justice is satisfied, was an act of free favour on the part of God, so the giving of the pardon which comes through Jesus Christ is in the same manner a matter of absolute grace, and by no means of debt or obligation. Do not, therefore, whenever you speak of our Lord's satisfaction which he made to justice, think that justice has eclipsed mercy; or, on the other hand, whenever you speak of the grace of God in pardoning sin, do not imagine that mercy has blinded the eyes of justice; for it is a part of the Christian faith that in the death of Christ justice shines out full-orbed like the sun at midday, while mercy is glorified after a like fashion. God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; where sin abounded grace doth much more abound. Justice is not forgotten, but grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Transgression, iniquity, and sin are put away by the All-merciful according to the riches of his grace.

Our text speaks of "the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace," and from it we learn *the measure of forgiveness, the manner of it, and the manifestations of it.* O for heavenly light while we view this grand truth. Illuminate us, O thou Spirit of all grace!

I. From the text we learn THE MEASURE OF FORGIVENESS. Hear ye this, ye burdened souls, ye self-condemned spirits, ye that have shut yourselves out from hope of mercy—hear me earnestly, I pray you, that your souls may live. It may be while I am speaking to you your minds will be quieted, and you will find the key which will unlock every door in Doubting Castle, and you will be set at liberty from Giant Despair.

Observe, then, that the measure of forgiveness is the riches of God's grace, and this statement leads us to observe that *it is not the character or person of the offender which is the measure of mercy, but the character of the offended One.* Is there not rich consolation in this undoubted fact? The pardon to be hoped for is not to be measured by you and what you are, but by God and what he is. In matters of offence and forgiveness the rule almost always holds good, that pardon becomes likely or unlikely, easy or difficult, not so much according to the offence as according to the character of the person offended. One man will forgive a grievous wrong while another will not overlook a wry word. Take an instance from English history: John had most villainously treated his brother Richard in his absence. Was it likely that when he of the lion's heart came home he would pass over his brother's grievous offence? If you look at John, villain that he was, it was most unlikely that he should be forgiven; but then, if you consider the brave, high-souled Richard, the very flower of chivalry, you expect a generous deed. Base as John was he was likely to be forgiven, because Richard was so free of heart, and accordingly pardon was right royally given by the great-hearted monarch. Had John been only half as guilty, if his brother Richard

had been like himself he would have made him lay his neck on the block. If John had been Richard and Richard had been John, no matter how small the offence, there would have been no likelihood of pardon at all. So is it in all matters of transgression and pardon. You must take the offence somewhat into account, it is true, but not one-half so much as the character of the person who has been offended. Suppose I were asked at this present time to reconcile two persons who are at enmity: if the one who evidently had been injured was one of certain brethren around me whose forgiving spirits I have long relied upon, I should feel my task to be easy, whatever the offence might have been: but I know some others about whom I should say, "I don't know. I am afraid I shall not get on the right side of them. I shall have to approach them very carefully; however small the offence, it will be hard to remove their anger." I know certain persons of old; they are quick-tempered and ready to be aggrieved for small reasons, and they are slow in burning out, having fine memories for an affront. It is hard to get a forgiving word out of such sour spirits. You see, the nature of a pardon materially depends upon the character of the pardoner. Let us establish this fact, and then see what light it throws upon the probability of pardon to any of you who are seeking it. With whom are you dealing? You have offended—who is he whom you have offended? Is it one whose anger is quickly aroused? No, the Lord is longsuffering, and exceedingly patient. Forty years long was he grieved with one generation; and many a time did he pity them and remove his wrath from them. Is he one who is hard to satisfy, and not easily persuaded to forgive? Nay, the choirs of the temple of old chanted as one of his sweetest praises, the oft-repeated words, "His mercy endureth for ever." Again and again they answered one to another, "His mercy endureth for ever." If the pardon were to be according to your character you would never be pardoned at all; if it were to be measured according to your offence you would never be forgiven; but since the probability of pardon lies in the character of God, then, O thou guilty one, thou self-condemned one, take heart of hope and come to thy Father's feet and say, "Father, forgive me, for I have sinned." Look into the face of God and see if he is not ready to forgive. Do you tell me that you dare not even think of the face of your offended God? Then I ask you to look into the face of Jesus Christ, for in his loving countenance shines all the brightness of the Father's glory. Is it possible for you to look at the Lord Jesus and doubt his willingness to forgive? He whose eyes wept over a guilty city, he whose hands were weary with incessantly doing good to those who despised him, he who gave his feet to the cruel nails for his adversaries, and who at last poured out the life-floods of his heart for those that mocked him, he must be willing to forgive! The measure of forgiveness, then, lies in the riches of divine grace, and this may encourage the chief of sinners to expect mercy.

Again, since the forgiveness of sins is "according to the riches of his grace," then *it is not according to our conceptions of God's mercy*, but according to that mercy itself, and the riches of it. We conceive hard things of God at times, we measure his corn with our bushel, we feel that he cannot pass by this and that crime, but that in certain points his grace may be vanquished by human wickedness. Our ideas of God's

mercy are narrow, and we think him to be altogether such as we are. Listen, then: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God's love is not to be measured by a mercer's yard, nor his mercy to be weighed in the balances of the merchant: he hath riches of grace surpassing all the wealth which the imagination could ascribe to him whose name is Love. When he gave his dear Son, his other self, that he might bleed and die, he gave us proof that there was no penury of love in the coffers of his heart. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The measure of mercy, then, is not our conception of God, but God as he really is; and who is he that can tell us how large is his love, how wide is his grace, how high is his goodness, how deep is his favour? I would have thee come, poor sinner, to God as to a deep abyss into which thy sins can be cast and never heard of more. I would have thee come to God in Christ as to one who is able with a glance of his eye to make thy sin dissolve like snow in the summer's sun, and vanish utterly, so that if it be searched for it shall not be found: yea, it shall not be, saith the Lord. Is there not a fountain in this truth overflowing with comfort to the most cast down one, whose bleeding heart is smarting under the lash of an angry conscience? I think if I had heard this truth plainly stated years ago I should not have remained so long in bondage, but I should have risen to my feet and have run to the Saviour and have found peace at once.

If, again, the measure of mercy is "according to the riches of his grace," then *no limit to pardon can be set by the amount of human sin which can be forgiven.* Sin is no trifle, and yet pardon is no impossibility. Nobody can measure the greatness of the guilt of a single sin: it is a world of iniquity. People talk of little sins, but there are no such things: the least rebellion against God is an intensely great evil. Yet there are degrees of sinning, and one offence may be greater than another, and one man's offences may be far more rank and crying than those of his neighbours. If it be possible that one of my hearers has committed all the grosser sins, has heaped them up, has raked the kennels for them, has committed crimes in a way scarcely to be spoken of, committed them again and again until the amount of his sins has become well-nigh incalculable, yet this does not render his forgiveness impossible. If there be one here who has gone to such an extreme of sin that he must set himself apart as being above all ordinary sinners, worthy of a special place in hell, worthy of a red-hot bolt from the right hand of the avenging God, yet pardon may be granted him. Hear me, O my friend: thou hast not gone beyond the power of God to pardon thee, for the measure of his pardon is "according to the riches of his grace." And he does not say that he stops short here or there by reason of excessive vileness on the transgressor's part. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." There is a sin against the Holy Ghost which shall never be forgiven, but that is unpardonable only for this reason,—that where once it is committed the man never seeks forgiveness, nor desires it; that sin kills his conscience, for it is a sin which is unto death, and the sinner henceforth goes gaily down to destruction, never seeking

forgiveness. If you seek mercy, be you who you may, you shall have it, if you will believe in Christ Jesus. If all the sins of all mankind were heaped upon you, if you sought mercy by confession of sin and faith in Christ, you should not be denied, but your sin should be blotted out, "according to the riches of his grace."

Another comfortable conclusion follows from this, that *no limit is set to the time in which a man has sinned*, so as to bound the reach of grace by the lapse of years. Our text does not say that there is forgiveness of sins according to such and such a time of life, but "according to the riches of his grace." It is a blessed thing to come to God when you are young, a thing to sing of throughout the rest of your existence. Happy day when my young heart first leaped at the sound of the Saviour's name! But oh, if grey hairs are covering your head, and years have ploughed their furrows on your brow, think not the forgiveness of sin to be impossible to you. What though your remaining days are so few that a little child may write them, and the last of them will soon flicker away into darkness, yet if you will come and put your trust in Jesus, your transgressions shall vanish, and your soul shall be even as a new born child; for Christ makes all things new. "According to the riches of his grace": this reaches the oldest man, this brings hope of mercy to the most aged woman. I would to God I could speak familiarly with all unconverted persons who are getting into years, and tell them not to stand back from Jesus through any fear that the past has sealed their doom, for there is forgiveness and plenteous redemption. Still the gate of mercy stands wide open, and if you are the oldest sinner that ever came to Christ, then you will be one of the special wonders of heaven; you will be one that they will gaze upon with astonishment in glory, and point you out with pleasure, saying, "Here is the oldest sinner that was born again." I think you are more likely to be received than anybody, "according to the riches of his grace."

Let me draw another inference. If pardon be "according to the riches of his grace," *it is not according to the bitterness of the sorrow which has been felt by the sinner.* There is a notion abroad that we must pass through a period of keen remorse before we can expect to be accepted with God. "Yes," says one, "I do not wonder that such a person was pardoned, since for years he was ready to destroy himself in his despair; he scarcely slept, he forgot to eat bread, he went about wringing his hands in agony." Beware of doting after this fashion. There must be sorrow for sin in every true believer, and there will be; but the best form of sorrow for sin generally follows forgiveness, and does not precede it. I never hated sin so much as when I knew that God had forgiven me. With all my soul do I sometimes sing to myself the choice lines of Mr. Monsell:

"My sins, my sins, my Saviour!
How sad on thee they fall,
Seen through thy gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.

"I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee.

"My sins, my sins, my Saviour!
Their guilt I never knew
Till, with thee, in the desert
I near thy passion drew;

"Till with thee in the garden
I heard thy pleading prayer,
And saw the sweat-drops bloody
That told thy sorrow there."

"But," saith one, "I am so afraid that I can never be forgiven." You have no right to entertain such a fear, for that is giving God the lie. "But I dare not trust Christ." My hearer, mind what you say on that score, for it is a tender point. You ought not to dare to doubt Christ, but there is no daring in trusting him. When God sets forth his dear Son to be a propitiation for sin, it is not humility, it is wicked pride that makes anyone say, "I dare not trust him." Who are you to raise a question about trusting Jesus, the faithful and true? It is black presumption to refuse your confidence to God who cannot lie. The Lord himself bids you come and trust his Son; do you refuse his command? Will you sooner perish than do the Lord Jesus the justice to trust him? "Ah, but surely," saith one, "I knew a person who was months and years in distress about his sin." I know such a person now. I know one who was five years an unbelieving seeker, but he was a fool for being so. There was no reason why he should have been in the dark so long, for the sun had arisen; his eyes were blindfolded by his own folly. If he had believed in Jesus Christ right off he might have had the forgiveness of sin at once. Half of that which is put down in biographies as the work of the Spirit is the work of the devil, and the result of unbelief. John Bunyan gives a long story in "Grace Abounding," and I am thankful that he does; but he never meant that we were to imitate him in his unbelief and hard thoughts of God. Those hideous doubts and horrible fears were not the work of the Spirit of God; they were the work of John Bunyan's vivid imagination and the devil together: they had nothing to do with the pardon of his sin except that they hindered him from finding it month after month. Your business, poor guilty sinner, is to believe that mercy is dealt out by God to sinners, not according to their despair and remorse, but "according to the riches of his grace." Where has God commanded us to despair? Doth he not command us to believe? Where hath he ever commanded remorse? Doth he not bid us hope in his mercy? We are to come to Jesus just as we are, and trust him, and we shall be forgiven all trespasses in a moment by our loving, waiting Father. "He that believeth in him is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

And so let me say that the measure of God's forgiveness is *not even the strength of a man's faith.* The measure of God's forgiveness is "according to the riches of his grace." You, dear soul, are to come and trust in what Jesus Christ did when he bled away his life for sinners, and then your pardon shall be measured out to you, not according to the greatness and strength of your confidence, but according to the immeasurable mercy of the heart of God. You may have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, your faith may only dare to touch the

garment's hem of the great Saviour, you may get no further than to say, "He hath said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' and I do come to him: if I perish, I will perish trusting him," and yet that faith will save you. I would your faith were stronger; I believe it will be so before long: but if it be only as the green blade which timidly springeth up from the soil in the cold spring and is almost afraid of the biting wind, if there be but life in it, if it live alone upon Christ Jesus, it will suffice for salvation. Jesus saith to the weak believer as well as to the strong saint, "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee if thou believest in Jesus; for the measure of thy forgiveness is not thy faith, nor thy tears of repentance, nor thy bitter regrets, nor thy sin, nor thy conception of God's goodness, nor thy character, either past or present or future; but the forgiveness which is granted from the Lord is "according to the riches of his grace." I feel half envious of men who can speak with the tongue of eloquence, for this theme deserves better speech than mine, and yet if I had the tongues of angels I could not set forth to you one half of the comfort which is to be found in this charming subject. My bare and unadorned style may not ill beseem the matchless beauty of the grace which stands before you in its own native loveliness. The God of heaven and earth who hateth sin nevertheless loveth sinners: he hath given his dear Son to die for them, and upon their accepting his Son as their hope and trust he passeth by their transgression, iniquity, and sin, not according to the feeble measure of their conceptions, but "according to the riches of his grace." Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men! Thanks be unto God for such amazing grace.

II. In the second place, I am going to spend a little time, as God may help me, in speaking upon THE MANNER OF FORGIVENESS. The manner of forgiveness is "according to the riches of his grace." Then I see in the mode and manner of forgiveness, first of all, *absolute freeness*. "According to the riches of his free favour," for that is the meaning of the word "Grace." God forgives none because of payment made by them in any form. If we could bring him mountains of gold and silver, they would be nothing worth to him: if we bring him tears in rivers or alms in alps, or resolves, vows, and promises in countless numbers, all will amount to nothing as a bribe of grace. Forgiveness, like love, is unpurchasable by us. God's pardons are absolutely free. He forgives because he chooses to forgive, out of sheer pity to the sinner, out of clear, unmixed compassion, but with no adulteration of anything like bribe or price. Forgiveness is absolutely free. Then why should not *you* have it? Oh, you who have said, "It will never come to me,"—why not to you? "Oh," you have said, "I am not prepared." Why should it not come to you though you are unprepared? Is preparedness a sort of price? Since it comes freely, why not to you? "But I have scarcely thought of it: I dropped in here this morning merely to spend an hour;"—and why not spend that hour in singing of free grace and pardoning love? Why not let this be the first hour of your true life—the hour in which you begin to live unto God? Pardon is absolutely free: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"According to the riches of his grace": this hints *a royal ease.* When you and I give away money to the poor, we have to pause, and see how much is left in our purse; we have to calculate our incomes to see whether we may not be spending too much in charity; but those who have great riches can give and not calculate: even so God when he grants forgiveness gives it "according to the riches of his grace." He never has to think whether he will have grace enough left: he will be none the richer if he withholds it, none the poorer if he bestows it. There is a magnificent ease about the benefactions of God: he scatters the largesse of his mercy right and left with unstinted liberality. The Roman conquerors, traversing the Via Sacra in triumph, were accustomed to scatter gold and silver with both hands as they rode along, and the eager crowd gathered up the shower of gifts. Our Lord, when he ascended on high and led captivity captive, scattered gifts among men with royal splendour and munificence. So does God pardon sinners as if it were every-day work with him: his goodness flashes on all sides as water from a fountain in full play, or as light and heat from the noonday sun. You have not to extract forgiveness from a palm fast closed: God is more pleased to pardon than we are to be pardoned. When the prodigal son laid his head in his father's bosom, and his father kissed him, who had the most joy, think you, the son or the father? I know the prodigal's heart overflowed with gladness, but then the father's heart was more capacious, and when he said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found," there was an incalculable depth of delight in the expression. It was the father who called for music and dancing, feasting and merriment: I fear the son was hardly so demonstrative in his delight. O poor weary seekers, hear ye this inspired word and be glad—"He delighteth in mercy." Come home: come home, poor wanderer! It is harder work to you to come home than for your Father to receive you. It is more trouble for you to ask for mercy than for God to give it you; it is harder work for you to believe that he can save than it is for him to do it. To him mercy is pleasant work, the cunning art of his right-hand, which he never can forget. Oh, come and receive the mercy which the Lord gives lavishly, according to the wealth of his goodness.

"According to the riches of his grace": that means *unquestionable fulness.* The man who is forgiven of the Lord is not half forgiven, but altogether absolved. There is a theology which teaches that when a man believes in Jesus Christ he is pardoned up to a point, but in future he may get into arrears again, and if he does not see to it he may again be accused, and summoned before the judgment-seat. This is not our theology. We believe in him who said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." I believe that when Jesus Christ died for his people he did not make atonement for half their sins, but for all of them; and in that day when he said, "It is finished," there was a virtual wiping out of all the score of all his redeemed from the book of God's remembrance. Hence his salvation is complete, and those who have it are altogether delivered from the ruin which sin involves. If you come to Christ he will grant you deep, full, living, substantial pardon, such pardon as will put you among God's children, such pardon that God will

have no back reckonings with you, no calling of you to account at some future time; such pardon that you shall be as much accepted as if you had never sinned, and God shall love you as though your whole life had been spent in his fear. The blood of Jesus makes us whiter than snow, and absolute innocence cannot be more white than that. There shall be no sin left against you to be in the future quoted to your dismay. Thus saith the Lord, "In those days and in that time, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Such a mode of pardon is "according to the riches of his grace."

Again, the text implies, *irreversible certainty*. "According to the riches of his grace." For God to pardon and then afterwards to condemn would not be "according to the riches of his grace." If Her Majesty were to issue a free pardon for a criminal, and then afterwards hang him, it would be poor work: it would not be according to the riches of her favour certainly; and if you and I get pardon through Jesus Christ, we can no more be lost than God can become poor in love. Believe in Christ Jesus, and get a pardon for thy transgressions under the sign manual of Jehovah, and thou art clear for ever. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us;" and how far is that? It is an infinite distance, and from an infinite distance our sins can never be brought back. They are gone; they are blotted out; drowned like the Egyptians in the Red Sea: their faces we shall never see again for ever. That pardon must be irreversible which is given "according to the riches of his grace."

Once more, it suggests *unfailing renewal*. It is "forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." It does not mean forgiveness up to a certain point, and then if you sin again no more forgiveness; but daily forgiveness for daily sin, a fresh spring rising for fresh thirst. Joseph Hart sings—

> "This fountain from guilt, not only makes pure,
> And gives, soon as felt, infallible cure;
> But if guilt removèd, return, and remain,
> Its power may be provèd again and again."

We may come to Christ as freely to-day as we did thirty years ago, and find ourselves washed white again: we may come again with all the accumulated wanderings and backslidings of our past years, and just believing as we did at first, we shall find our soul again set at its first liberty and admitted into its first joy. God grant us to know all this in our own souls. I wish I could speak as I can sometimes think, or think as the word of God allows me to think. O blessed thought, that you and I, condemned and lost and ruined by our guilt, should only need to look to Christ on the cross and in a moment should receive pardon, "according to the riches of his grace"; all for nothing, all freely given, not given as a sham, but as a reality; real pardon for real sin, abiding pardon, everlasting pardon, a pardon which retrieves all our loss, and adds a charm which unfallen spirits cannot know. O the splendour of God! Where does it flame forth so overpoweringly as in pardoning grace! Is not this the glory of God at its full, that he passeth by transgression and remembers not the iniquity of his people?

III. Our last word is to be upon THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS PARDON. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Here we see that *forgiveness of sin comes to us entirely through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, and if we go to Jesus Christ, fixing our eyes especially upon his atoning sacrifice, we have pardon by virtue of his blood. I see nothing here about any human priest: Christ is priest enough for us. I see nothing about absolution by man. No: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." It must be a very dangerous thing to be hoping for pardon because you have confessed to a mere man; whatever manipulations may have been performed upon his shaven head, it must be a very risky thing to have your salvation depend upon whether or not he was properly ordained by a priest of higher rank. We escape all such perils by going to the fountain-head, even to Christ himself, the one Mediator between God and man. According to God's command we trust Jesus and receive pardon, not in word only, but in spirit and in truth. There is no hazard in faith in Jesus, for all those who have tried it will tell you how blessed the result has been in their own cases. Pardon by any other means is impossible, but by Jesus Christ it is certain. Everything else fails, but faith in Christ never fails. Only trust him, only trust him, you are pardoned, pardoned at once through his most precious blood.

The text says, "We *have*" it, and I want to lay stress on that for just a minute. "*We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*" We *have* it. As many as believe in Christ are pardoned. Why, then, should we go to Church and say that we are "miserable sinners?" Believers are not miserable sinners; they are full often happy in a sense of full remission. If our sins are blotted out, why do we speak to God as if his anger still remained? Shall we lie unto God? We are indeed miserable sinners if we assume a misery which we have no reason to feel. We are miserable sinners for not believing God and pretending that we do. Is there no difference between a believer and an unbeliever, so that the self-same words will suit both one and the other, and they may kneel down side by side and alike call themselves "miserable sinners"? Then what has the gospel done for believers? What is the use of the sprinkled blood? There is all the difference in the world between a believer and an unbeliever. The unbeliever hath the wrath of God abiding on him; but as for the believer, his sin is forgiven him for Christ's name sake, and let him know it and declare it. "Am I not, then, daily to confess sin?" Yes, daily as you commit it, but not under the garb of misery, as though you were an unpardoned criminal. Are you not a beloved child? Confess sin with the certainty that you are forgiven, and that still the sentence of forgiveness runs on and includes these present and future sins as well as all that are past. You are to humbly sue for continued mercy, but you are not to pray as if you were at enmity with God and miserable under a sense of his wrath. Far better is the spirit which sings "O God, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." That is the way to talk. If you believe, you should speak in that fashion. No longer is the weight and burden of sin lying on your conscience and heart: your load is lifted; you are forgiven. If your child has been offending you,

and you are angry with him, he feels ill at ease in your presence. At last you say, "My boy, it is all gone now; do not offend again. You are quite forgiven; come here, and let me kiss you." Does he reply, "Father, I am afraid"? If so it is evident that he does not understand that you have forgiven him: and even if he receives your kiss, but still remains unhappy in your presence, it is clear that he does not believe in you or in the sincerity of your forgiveness. As soon as the light dawns on his mind "Father has quite put all my fault away," then he is merry in his play and easy in his conversation with you. Now, be with God like a child at home. Do not act towards him as if still he frowned upon you. He smiles. Do not pray to him as if you dreaded him, and thought he would smite you. He cannot smite you: he has smitten Christ instead of you. Your debt has been paid, and can never be demanded of you. Christ nailed the receipted bill to his cross in the face of heaven and earth and hell. Eternal justice cannot charge you now with sins which were, once for all, charged on your great Substitute, and borne by him. God is not unrighteous first to punish Christ and then to punish those for whom Christ died; to take the payment first from Christ and afterwards from you; from the Surety, and then from the debtor. No, no. Rest then in perfect peace. "Forgiveness according to the riches of his grace" is yours by faith, yours at this moment, and you may know it. You that have believed in Christ ought to know that you are accepted in Christ, for you are so accepted, and it is a pity not to have the joy of it.

I want you to feel the love which rises out of pardoned sin. You must love him who has removed all your iniquities. I want you to feel the zeal which finds fuel in the forgiveness in sin. Bring your alabaster box, and pour the ointment upon his head who has forgiven you so freely. There are no workers like pardoned men; there are no givers like pardoned men and women; there are no lovers like pardoned men and women: there are no singers like pardoned men and women: there are no saints before the throne, no courtiers at the right hand of the eternal Sovereign like those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Come, then, ye guilty, and receive forgiveness in Christ! Come, ye vilest of the vile, the door is set open for you, and a loving heart invites you through these lips. I am full of hope that you will come. You must come. Love will constrain you to believe in my Lord. Oh, may the Holy Spirit compel you *now* to come to the Saviour, and to be cleansed from all sin. When you have obtained mercy hasten to tell others of the boundless mercy of the God of love, and of the riches of his grace displayed in forgiving you all trespasses. God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—241, 231, 51.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WATERPOTS AT CANA.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."—John ii. 7.

You know the narrative. Jesus was at a wedding feast, and when the wine ran short, he provided for it right bountifully. I do not think that I should do any good if I were to enter upon the discussion as to what sort of wine our Lord Jesus made on this occasion. It was wine, and I am quite sure it was very good wine, for he would produce nothing but the best. Was it wine such as men understand by that word now? It was wine; but there are very few people in this country who ever see, much less drink, any of that beverage. That which goes under the name of wine is not true wine, but a fiery, brandied concoction of which I feel sure that Jesus would not have tasted a drop. The fire-waters and blazing spirits of modern wine manufacturers are very different articles from the juice of the grape, mildly exhilarating, which was the usual wine of more sober centuries. As to the wine such as is commonly used in the East, a person must drink inordinately before he would become intoxicated with it. It would be possible, for there were cases in which men were intoxicated with wine; but, as a rule, intoxication was a rare vice in the Saviour's times and in the preceding ages. Had our great Exemplar lived under our present circumstances, surrounded by a sea of deadly drink, which is ruining tens of thousands, I know how he would have acted. I am sure he would not have contributed by word or deed to the rivers of poisonous beverages in which bodies and souls are now being destroyed wholesale. The kind of wine which he made was such that, if there had been no stronger drink in the world, nobody might have thought it necessary to enter any protest against drinking it. It would have done nobody any hurt, be sure of that, or else Jesus our loving Saviour would not have made it.

Some have raised a question about the great quantity of wine, for I suppose there must have been no less than one hundred and twenty gallons, and probably more. "They did not want all that," says one, "and even of the weakest kind of wine it would be a deal too much." But you are thinking of an ordinary wedding here, are you not, when there are

ten or a dozen, or a score or two, met together in a parlour? An oriental wedding is quite another affair. Even if it be only a village, like Cana of Galilee, everybody comes to eat and drink, and the feast lasts on for a week or a fortnight. Hundreds of people must be fed, for often open house is kept. Nobody is refused, and consequently a great quantity of provision is required. Besides, they may not have consumed all the wine at once. When the Lord multiplied loaves and fishes, they must eat the loaves and fishes directly, or else the bread would grow mouldy, and the fish would be putrid; but wine could be stored and used months afterwards. I have no doubt that such wine as Jesus Christ made was as good for keeping as it was for using. And why not set the family up with a store in hand? They were not very rich people. They might sell it if they liked. At any rate, that is not my subject, and I do not intend getting into hot water over the question of cold water. I abstain myself from alcoholic drink in every form, and I think others would be wise to do the same; but of this each one must be a guide unto himself.

Jesus Christ commenced the gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses, who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of liberality, turning water into wine. He does not only supply necessaries, but gives luxuries, and this is highly significant of the kingdom of his grace. Here he not only gives sinners enough to save them, but he gives abundantly, grace upon grace. The gifts of the covenant are not stinted or stunted, they are neither small in quantity nor in quality. He gives to men not only the water of life that they may drink and be refreshed, but "wines on the lees well refined" that they may rejoice exceedingly. And he gives like a king, who gives lavishly, without counting the cups and bottles. As to one hundred and twenty gallons, how little is that in comparison with the rivers of love and mercy which he is pleased to bestow freely out of his bountiful heart upon the most needy souls. You may forget all about the wine question, and all about wine, bad, good, or indifferent. The less we have to do with it the better, I am quite sure. And now let us think about our Lord's mercy, and let the wine stand as a type of his grace, and the abundance of it as the type of the abundance of his grace which he doth so liberally bestow.

Now, concerning this miracle, it may well be remarked how simple and unostentatious it was. One might have expected that when the great Lord of all came here in human form he would commence his miraculous career by summoning the scribes and Pharisees at least, if not the kings and princes of the earth, to see the marks of his calling and the guarantees and warrants of his commission; gathering them all together to work some miracle before them, as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, that they might be convinced of his Messiahship. He does nothing of the kind. He goes to a simple wedding among poor people, and there in the simplest and most natural way he displays his glory. When the water is to be turned into wine, when he selects that as the first miracle, he does not call for the master of the feast even, or for the bridegroom himself, or for any of the guests, and begin to say, "You clearly perceive that your wine is all gone. Now, I am about to show you a great marvel, to turn water into wine." No, he does it quietly

with the servants: he tells them to fill the waterpots: he uses the baths: he does not ask for any new vessels, but uses what were there, making no fuss or parade. He uses water, too, of which they had abundance, and works the miracle, if I may so speak, in the most commonplace and natural style; and that is just the style of Jesus Christ. Now, if it had been a Romish miracle it would have been done in a very mysterious, theatrical, sensational way, with no end of paraphernalia; but, being a genuine miracle, it is done just as nearly after the course of nature as the supernatural can go. Jesus does not have the waterpots emptied and then fill them with wine, but he goes as far with nature as nature will go, and uses water to make the wine from; therein following the processes of his providence which are at work every day. When the water drops from heaven, and flows into the earth to the roots of the vine, and so swells out the clusters with ruddy juice, it is through water that wine is produced. There is only a difference as to time whether the wine is created in the cluster, or in the waterpots. Our Lord does not call for any strangers to do it, but the ordinary servants shall bring ordinary water; and while they are drawing out the water, or what appears to them to be water, the servants shall perceive that the water has been turned into wine.

Now, whenever you try to serve Jesus Christ do not make a fuss about it, because he never made any fuss in what he did, even when he was working amazing miracles. If you want to do a good thing, go and do it as naturally as ever you can. Be simple hearted and simple minded. Be yourself. Do not be affected in your piety, as if you were going to walk to heaven on stilts: walk on your own feet, and bring religion to your own door and to your own fireside. If you have a grand work to do, do it with that genuine simplicity which is next akin to sublimity; for affectation, and everything that is gaudy and ostentatious, is, after all, mean and beggarly. Nothing but simple naturalness has about it a genuine beauty; and such a beauty there is about this miracle of the Saviour.

Let all these remarks stand as a kind of preface; for now I want to draw out *the principles which are hidden in my text;* and then, secondly, when I have displayed those principles, I want to show *how they should be carried out.*

I. "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN OUR LORD'S MODE OF PROCEDURE?

First, that, as a rule, *when Christ is about to bestow a blessing he gives a command.* This is a fact which your memories will help you to establish in a moment. It is not always so; but, as a general rule, a word of command goes before a word of power, or else with it. He is about to give wine, and the process does not consist in saying, "Let wine be," but it begins by a command addressed to men,—"Fill the waterpots with water." Here is a blind man: Christ is about to give him sight. He puts clay on his eyes, and then says, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash." There is a man with his arm swinging at his side, useless to him: Christ is going to restore it, and he says, "Stretch forth thine hand." Ay, and the principle goes so far that it holds good in cases where it would seem to be quite inapplicable, for if it be a child that is dead he says, "Maid, arise;" or if it be Lazarus, who by

this time stinks, being four days buried, yet he cries, "Lazarus, come forth." And thus he bestows a benefit by a command. Gospel benefits come with a gospel precept.

Do you wonder that this principle which is seen in the miracles is seen in the wonders of his divine grace? Here is a sinner to be saved. What does Christ say to that sinner? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Can he believe of himself? Is he not dead in sin? Brethren, raise no such questions, but learn that Jesus Christ has bidden men believe, and has commissioned his disciples to cry, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And he bids us go and preach this word—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But why command them? It is his will to do so, and that should be enough for you who call yourself his disciple. It was so even in the olden times, when the Lord set forth in vision his way of dealing with a dead nation. There lay the dry bones of the valley, exceeding many, and exceeding dry, and Ezekiel was sent to prophesy to them. What said the prophet? "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Is that his way of making them alive? Yes, by a command to hear; a thing which dry bones cannot do. He issues his command to the dead, the dry, the helpless, and by its power life comes. I pray you, be not disobedient to the gospel, for faith is a duty, or we should not read of "the obedience of faith." Jesus Christ, when he is about to bless, challenges men's obedience by issuing his royal orders.

The same thing is true when we come away from the unconverted to believers. When God means to bless his people and make them blessings it is by issuing a command to them. We have been praying to the Lord that he would arise and make bare his arm. His answer is, "Awake, awake, O Zion." We ask that the world may be brought to his feet, and his reply is, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." The command is to us the vehicle of the blessing. If we are to have the blessing of converts multiplied, and churches built up, Christ must give us the boon: it is altogether his gift, as much as it was his to turn the water into wine; yet first of all he says to us, "Go ye and proclaim my salvation unto the ends of the earth," for thus are we to fill the waterpots with water. If we be obedient to his command we shall see how he will work—how mightily he will be with us, and how our prayers shall be heard.

That is the first principle that I see here: Christ issues commands to those whom he will bless.

Secondly, *Christ's commands are not to be questioned, but to be obeyed.* The people want wine, and Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with *water*." Well, now, if these servants had been of the mind of the captious critics of modern times, they would have looked at our Lord a long while, and objected boldly: "We do not want any water; it is not the feast of purifications; it is a wedding feast. We do not require water at a wedding. We shall want water when we are going up to the synagogue, or to the temple, that we may purify our hands according to our custom: but we do not want water just now: the hour, the

occasion, and the fitness of things, call for *wine*." But Mary's advice to them was sound—"Whatsoever he saith to you, do it." Thus, too, let us neither question nor cavil, but do his bidding straight away.

It may sometimes seem that Christ's command is not pertinent to the point in hand. The sinner, for instance, says, "Lord, save me: conquer in me my sin." Our Lord cries, "Believe," and the sinner cannot see how believing in Jesus will enable him to get the mastery over a besetting sin. There does not at first sight appear to be any connection between the simple trusting of the Saviour and the conquest of a bad temper, or the getting rid of a bad habit, such as intemperance, passion, covetousness, or falsehood. There is such a connection, but recollect, whether you can see the connection or not, it is yours "not to reason why," but yours to do what Jesus bids you do; for it is in the way of the command that the miracle of mercy will be wrought. "Fill the waterpots with water," though what you want is wine. Christ sees a connection between the water and the wine, though you do not. He has a reason for the pots being filled with water, which reason, as yet, you do not know: it is not yours to ask an explanation, but to yield obedience. You are, in the first instance, just to do what Jesus bids you, as he bids you, now that he bids you, and because he bids you, and you shall find that his commandments are not grievous, and in keeping of them there is a great reward.

Sometimes these commands may even seem to be trivial. They may look as if he trifled with us. The family were in need of wine; Jesus says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The servants might have said, "This is clearly a mere putting of us off and playing with us. Why, we should be better employed in going round to these poor people's friends, and asking them to contribute another skin of wine. We should be much better employed in finding out some shop where we could purchase more: but to send us to the well to fill those great waterpots that hold so much water does seem altogether a piece of child's play." I know, brethren, that sometimes the path of duty seems as if it could not lead to the desired result. We want to be doing something more; that something more might be wrong, but it looks as if we could thereby compass our design more easily and directly, and so we hanker after this uncommanded and perhaps forbidden course. And I know that many a troubled conscience thinks that simply to believe in Jesus is too little a thing. The deceitful heart suggests a course which looks to be more effectual. "Do some penance: feel some bitterness; weep a certain amount of tears. Goad your mind, or break your heart": so cries carnal self. Jesus simply commands, "Believe." It does appear to be too little a thing to be done, as if it could not be that eternal life should be given upon putting your trust in Jesus Christ: but this is the principle we want to teach you—that when Jesus Christ is about to give a blessing he issues a command which is not to be questioned, but to be at once obeyed. If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established; but if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

The third principle is this—that *whenever we get a command from Christ it is always wisdom to carry it out zealously*. He said, "Fill the waterpots with water," and they filled them *up to the brim*. You know

there is a way of filling a vessel, and there is another way of filling it. It is full, and you cannot help it up; but still you can fill it up till it begins almost to run over: the liquid trembles as if it must surely fall in a crystal cascade. It is a filling fulness. In fulfilling Christ's commands, my dear brethren and sisters, let us go to their widest extent: let us fill them up to the brim. If it is "Believe," oh, believe him with all your might: trust him with your whole heart. If it is "Preach the gospel," preach it in season and out of season; and preach *the* gospel—the whole of it. Fill it up to the brim. Do not give the people a half gospel, give them a brimming-over gospel. Fill the vessels up to the very brim. If you are to repent, ask to have a hearty and a deep repentance—full to the brim. If you are to believe, ask to have an intense, absolute, childlike dependence, that your faith may be full to the brim. If you are to pray, pray mightily: fill the vessel of prayer up to the brim. If you are to search the Scriptures for blessing, search them from end to end: fill the Bible-reading vessel up to the brim. Christ's commands are never meant to be done in a half-hearted manner. Let us throw our whole soul into whatever he commands us, even though, as yet, we cannot see the reason why he has set us the task. Christ's commands should be fulfilled with enthusiasm, and carried out to the extreme, if extreme be possible.

The fourth principle is that *our earnest action in obedience to Christ is not contrary to our dependence upon him, but it is necessary to our dependence upon him.* I will show you that in a moment. There are some brethren I know who say, "Hem! you hold what you call revival services, and you try to arouse men by earnest appeals and exciting addresses. Do you not see that God will do his own work? These efforts are just your trying to take the work out of God's hands. The proper way is to trust in him, and do nothing." All right, brother. We have your word for it—that you trust in him and do nothing. I take the liberty not to be so very certain that you do trust him, for if I remember who you are, and I think I have been to your house, you are about the most miserable, desponding, unbelieving person that I know. You do not even know whether you are saved yourself nine times out of ten. Well now, I think you should hardly come and cry yourself up for your faith. If you had such a wonderfully great faith, there is no doubt whatever that according to your faith it would be unto you. How many have been added to your church through your doing nothing this year—that blessed church of yours, where you exercise this blessed faith without works? How many have been brought in? "Well, we do not have very many additions." No, and I think you are not likely to have. If you go about the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom by inaction, I do not think that you go *the way* to work which Jesus Christ approves of. But we venture to say to you that we who go in for working for Christ with all our heart and soul, using any means within our reach to bring men in to hear the gospel, feel as much as ever you do that we cannot do anything at all in the matter apart from the Holy Spirit, and we trust in God, I think, almost as much as you do, because our faith has produced rather more results than yours has done. I should not wonder if it turns out that your faith without works is dead, being alone, and that our faith

having works with it has been living faith after all. I will put the case thus: Jesus Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The orthodox servant says, "My Lord, I fully believe that thou canst make wine for these people without any water, and by thy leave I will bring no water. I am not going to interfere with the work of God. I am quite certain that thou dost not want our help, gracious Lord. Thou canst make these waterpots to be full of wine without our bringing a single bucket of water, and so we will not rob thee of the glory of it. We will just stand back, and wait for thee. When the wine is made we will drink some of it and bless thy name; but meanwhile we pray thee have us excused, for pails are heavy carrying, and a good many must needs be brought to fill all those waterpots. It would be interfering with the divine work, and so we would rather take our ease." Do you not think that servants who talked so would prove that they had no faith in Jesus at all? We will not say that it would prove their unbelief, but we will say that it looks very like it. But look at the servant there who, as soon as ever Jesus commands "Fill the waterpots with water," says, "I do not know what he is at. I do not see the connection between fetching this water and providing the feast with wine, but I am off to the well: here, hand me a couple of pails. Come along, brother; come along and help fill the baths." There they go, and soon come joyfully back with the water, pouring it into the troughs till they are full up to the brim. Those seem to me to be the believing servants who obey the command, not understanding it, but expecting that, somehow or other, Jesus Christ knows the way to work his own miracle. By our earnest exertions we are not interfering with him, dear friends; far from it. We are proving our faith in him if we work for him as he bids us work, and trust in him alone with undivided faith.

The next principle I must lay equal stress upon is this,—*our action alone is not sufficient.* That we know, but let me remind you of it yet again. There are these waterpots, these troughs, these baths: they are full, and could not be fuller. What a spilling of water there is! You see that in their trying to fill them the water runs over here and there. Well, all these six great baths are full of water. Is there any more wine for all that? Not a drop. It is water that they brought, nothing but water, and it remains water still. Suppose that they should take that water into the feast; I am half afraid that the guests would not have thought cold water quite the proper liquid to drink at a wedding. They ought to have done so; but I am afraid they were not educated in the school of total abstinence. They would have said to the master of the feast, "Thou hast given us good wine, and water is a poor finish for the feast." I am sure it would not have done. And yet water it was, depend upon it, and nothing else but water, when the servants poured it into the pots. Even so, after all that sinners can do, and all that saints can do, there is nothing in any human effort which can avail for the saving of a soul till Christ speaks the word of power. When Paul has planted and Apollos watered, there is no increase till God gives it. Preach the gospel, labour with souls, persuade, entreat, exhort; but there is no power in anything that you do until Jesus Christ displays his divine might. His presence is our

power. Blessed be his name, he will come; and if we fill the waterpots with water, he will turn it into wine. He alone can do it, and those servants who show the most alacrity in filling up the waterpots are among the first to confess that it is he alone who can perform the deed.

And now the last principle here is that *although human action in itself falls short of the desired end, yet it has its place, and God has made it necessary by his appointment.* Why did our Lord have these waterpots filled with water? I do not say that it was necessary that it should have been done. It was not absolutely necessary in itself; but in order that the miracle might be all open and above board, it was necessary: for suppose he had said, "Go to those waterpots and draw out wine," those who watched him might have said that there was wine there before, and that no miracle was wrought. When our Lord had them filled up with water, there remained no room for any wine to be hidden away. It was just the same as with Elijah, when, in order to prove that there was no concealed fire upon the altar at Carmel, he bade them go down to the sea, and bring water, and pour it upon the altar, and upon the victim, till the trenches were filled. He said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time, and no possibility of imposture remained. And so, when the Lord Jesus bade the servants fill the waterpots with water, he put it beyond all possibility that he should be charged with imposture; and thus we see why it was necessary that they should be filled with water.

Moreover, it was necessary, because it was so instructive to the servants. Did you notice when I was reading it that the master of the feast, when he tasted the good wine, did not know where it came from. He could not make it out, and he uttered an expression which showed his surprise, mingled with his ignorance. But it is written, "The servants which drew the water knew." Now, when souls are converted in a church, it happens much in the same way with certain of the members, who are good people, but they do not know much about the conversion of sinners. They do not feel much joy in revivals; in fact, like the elder brother, they are rather suspicious of these wild characters being brought in: they consider themselves to be very respectable, and they would rather not have the lowest of people sitting in the pew with them: they feel awkward in coming so near them. They know little about what is going on. "But the servants which drew the water knew": that is to say, the earnest believers who do the work, and try to fill the waterpots, know all about it. Jesus bade them fill the vessels with water on purpose that the men who drew the water might know that it was a miracle. I warrant you, if you bring souls to Christ you will know his power. It will make you leap for joy to hear the cry of the penitent, and mark the bright flash of delight that passes over the new-born believer's face when his sins are washed away, and he feels himself renewed. If you want to know Jesus Christ's miraculous power you must go and—not work miracles, but just draw the water and fill the waterpots. Do the ordinary duties of Christian men and women—things in which there is no power of themselves, but which Jesus Christ makes to be connected with his

divine working, and it shall be for your instruction, and your comfort, that you had such work to do. "The servants which drew the water knew."

I think that I have said enough upon the principles which lie concealed within my text.

II. You must have patience with me while I try to apply these principles to practical purposes. LET US SEE HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS DIVINE COMMAND, "Fill the waterpots with water."

First, *use in the service of Christ such abilities as you have.* There stood the waterpots, six of them, and Jesus used what he found ready to his hand. There was water in the well; our Lord used that also. Our Lord is accustomed to employ his own people, and such abilities as they have, rather than angels or a novel class of beings created fresh for the purpose. Now, dear brothers and sisters, if you have no golden chalices, fill your earthen vessels. If you cannot consider yourselves to be goblets of rarest workmanship in silver, or if you could not liken yourselves to the best Sèvres ware, it does not matter; fill the vessels which you have. If you cannot, with Elias, bring fire from heaven, and if you cannot work miracles with the apostles, do what you can. If silver and gold you have none, yet such as you have dedicate to Christ. Bring water at his bidding, and it will be better than wine. The commonest gifts can be made to serve Christ's purpose. Just as he took a few loaves and fishes, and fed the crowd with them, so will he take your six waterpots and the water, and do his wine-making therewith.

Thus, you see, they improved what they had; for the waterpots were empty, but they filled them. There are a good many brethren here from the College to-night, and they are trying to improve their gifts and their abilities. I think you do right, my brethren. But I have heard some people say, "The Lord Jesus does not want your learning." No, it is very likely that he does not, any more than he needed the water: but then he certainly does not want your stupidity and your ignorance, and he does not want your rough, uncultivated ways of speaking. He did not seek for empty pitchers on this occasion; he would have them full, and the servants did well to fill them. Our Lord to-day does not want empty heads in his ministers, nor empty hearts; so, my brethren, fill your waterpots with water. Work away, and study away, and learn all you can, and fill the waterpots with water. "Oh," somebody will say, "but how are such studies to lead to the conversion of men? Conversion is like wine, and all that these young fellows will learn will be like water." You are right; but still I bid these students fill the waterpots with water, and expect the Lord Jesus to turn the water into wine. He can sanctify human knowledge so that it shall be useful to the setting forth of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I hope that the day has gone by when it is so much as dreamed that ignorance and coarseness are helpful to the kingdom of Christ. The great Teacher would have his people know all that they can know, and especially know himself, and the Scriptures, that they may set him forth, and proclaim his gospel. "Fill the waterpots with water."

Next, to apply this principle, let us all *use such means of blessing as God appoints.* What are they? First, there is the reading of the

Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures." Search them all you can. Try to understand them. "But if I know the Bible, shall I be therefore saved?" No, you must know Christ himself by the Spirit. Still, "fill the waterpots with water." While you are studying the Scriptures you may expect the Saviour will bless his own word, and turn the water into wine.

Then there is attendance upon the means of grace, and hearing a gospel ministry. Mind you fill that waterpot with water. "But I may hear thousands of sermons and not be saved." I know it is so, but your business is to fill this waterpot with water, and while you are listening to the gospel God will bless it, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Take care to use the means which God appoints. Since our Lord has appointed to save men by the preaching of the word, I pray that he will raise up those who will preach without ceasing, in season and out of season, indoors and in the streets. "But they won't be saved by our preaching." I know that. Preaching is the water: and while we are preaching, God will bless it, and turn the water into wine. Let us distribute religious books and tracts. "Oh, but people won't be saved by reading them." Very likely not, but while they are reading them God may bring his truth to remembrance and impress their hearts. "Fill the waterpots with water." Give away abundance of tracts. Scatter religious literature everywhere. "Fill the waterpots with water," and the Lord will turn the water into wine.

Remember the prayer-meeting. What a blessed means of grace it is, for it brings down power for all the works of the church: fill that waterpot with water. I have not to complain of your attendance at prayer-meetings: but oh, keep it up, dear brethren! You *can* pray. Blessed be his name, you have the spirit of prayer. Pray on! "Fill the waterpots with water," and in answer to prayer Jesus will turn it into wine. Sunday-school teachers, do not neglect your blessed means of usefulness. "Fill the waterpots with water." Work the Sunday-school system with all your might. "But it will not save the children merely to get them together, and teach them of Jesus. We cannot give them new hearts." Who said that you could? "Fill the waterpots with water." Jesus Christ knows how to turn it into wine, and he does not fail to do it when we are obedient to his commands.

Use all the means, but *take care that you use those means right heartily.* I come back to that part of the text—"And they filled them up to the brim." When you teach the young ones in the Sunday-school, teach them well. Fill them to the brim. When you preach, dear sir, do not preach as if you were only half awake; stir yourself up; fill your ministry to the brim. When you are trying to evangelize the community, do not attempt it in a half-hearted way, as if you did not care whether their souls were saved or not; fill them to the brim; preach the gospel with all your might, and beg for power from on high. Fill every vessel to the brim. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. Nobody ever yet served Christ too well. I have heard that in some services there may be too much zeal, but in the service of Christ you may have as much zeal as ever you will and yet not exceed, if prudence be joined therewith. "Fill the waterpots with water," and

fill them to the brim. Go in for doing good with all your heart and soul and strength.

Further, in order to apply this principle, be sure to *remember when you have done all that you can do, that there is a great deficiency in all that you have done.* It is well to come away from tract-distributing and Sunday-school teaching and preaching, and go home and get to your knees, and cry, "Lord, I have done all that thou hast commanded me, and yet there is nothing done unless thou givest the finishing touch. Lord, I have filled the waterpots, and though I could only fill them with water, yet I have filled them to the brim. Lord, to the best of my ability, I have sought to win men for thyself. There cannot be a soul saved, a child converted, or any glory brought to thy name by what I have done, in and of itself; but, my Master, speak the miracle-working word, and let the water which fills the vessels blush into wine. Thou canst do it, though I cannot. I cast the burden upon thee."

And this leads me to the last application of the principle, which is—*trust in your Lord to do the work.* You see, there are two ways of filling waterpots. Suppose these people had never been commanded to fill the waterpots, and their doing it had had no reference to Christ whatever; suppose that it had been a freak of their own imagination, and they had said, "These people have no wine, but they shall have a bath if they like, and so we will fill the six waterpots with water." Nothing would have come of such a proceeding. There would have stood the water. The Eton school-boy said, "The conscious water saw its God and blushed," a truly poetic expression; but the conscious water would have seen the servants, and would not have blushed. It would have reflected their faces upon its shining surface, but nothing more would have happened. Jesus Christ himself must come, and in present power must work the miracle. It was because he had commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water that therefore he was bound, if I may use such an expression of our free King, bound to turn it into wine, for otherwise he would have been making fools of them, and they also might have turned round and said, "Why didst thou give us such a command as this?" If, after we have filled the waterpots with water, Jesus does not work by us, we shall have done what he bade us; but if we believe in him, I make bold to say that he is bound to come; for though we should be losers, and dreadful losers too, if he did not display his power, for we should have to lament, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought," yet we should not be such losers as he would be, for straightway the world would affirm that Christ's commands are empty, fruitless, idle. It would be declared that obedience to his word brings no result. The world would say, "You have filled the waterpots with water because he told you to do it. You expected him to turn the water into wine, but he did not do it. Your faith is vain; your whole obedience is vain; and he is not a fit Master to be served." *We* should be losers, but *he* would be a greater loser still, for he would lose his glory. For my part, I do not believe that a good word for Christ is ever spoken in vain. I am sure that no sermon with Christ in it is ever preached without result. Something will come of it, if not to-night, nor to-morrow; something will come of it. When I have printed a sermon, and seen it fairly in the volume,

I have before long been delighted to hear of souls saved by its means. And when I have not printed, but only preached, a discourse, I have still thought, something will come of it. I preached Christ. I put his saving truth into that sermon, and that seed cannot die. If it shall lie in the volume for years, like the grains of wheat in the mummy's hand, it will live, and grow, and bear fruit. Consequently, I have heard but lately of a soul brought to Christ by a sermon that I preached twenty-five years ago. I hear almost every week of souls having been brought to Christ by sermons preached at Park-street, and Exeter-hall, and the Surrey-gardens, and therefore I feel that God will not let a single faithful testimony fall to the ground. Go on, brethren. Go on filling the waterpots with water. Do not believe that you are doing much when you have done your utmost. Do not begin to congratulate yourselves on your past success. All must come from Christ; and it *will* come from Christ. Do not go to the prayer-meeting and say, "Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water, but"—and so on. That is not how the passage runs. It says just the contrary, and runs thus,—"Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase." The increase is surely given by God where the planting and sowing are rightly done. The servants fill the waterpots: the Master turns the water into wine.

The Lord grant us grace to be obedient to his command, especially to that command, "Believe and live!" and may we meet him in the marriage-feast above to drink of the new wine with him for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John i. 29—51; John ii. 1—11.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—432, 645, 739.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"A rich store of topics treated daintily, with broad humour, with quaint good sense, yet always with a subdued tone and high moral aim."—*Oxford Times.*

"It is as witty, humorous, and mirthful as *Punch*, and has the wisdom of the Proverbs of Solomon."—*Kelso Chronicle.*

"This book deserves, and no doubt will meet with, the same popularity as 'John Ploughman's Talk.'"—*Leath Herald.*

"Each sentence is a cluster of diamonds, some of them rough, but all of them real. It is the very quintessence of sanctified common sense. Every page is worth a mint of money."—*The Christian.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—Micah vi. 8.

WE shall chiefly dwell upon the last line:—"To walk humbly with thy God."

Man asks, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" and, as if he must set himself to answer his own question, he further enquires, "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Sacrifice of some sort is his idea, but he supposes that he must supply the sacrifice himself, and would fain know what it shall be. The answer which is given him chides him for the supposition that he is to answer his own question, for it begins thus:—"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee." If we had been attentive to God's voice we should not now be asking, "Wherewith shall I come?" for he has already showed us the way. The worship of God is the subject of revelation, not of invention. True religion is not a new design displaying each man's taste, but a copy from a plan, framed and fixed by the Lord himself. We are to follow a path well defined, and not to map out a course for ourselves. We are not like children crying in the dark after an unknown Father, whom we seek by ways of our own, but we are as babes who follow whither the warm hand of love gently draws them. To us it is not night, for the true light has risen, and is shining round about us; the Father has revealed himself, and we have an unction from the Holy One, so that all things needful for this life and godliness are lifted out of the region of the unknown, and placed among the matters concerning which the prophet saith, "He hath shewed thee, O man."

The true worship of God is not left to be a matter of conjecture, to be worked out by a man's thought from within; but it is a matter of distinct revelation to be received by faith from above. Do we all know

this? Are there not some among us, or at least around us, who desire a religion of their own? Is not this one of the special follies of the period? Let us escape from this snare. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." Abstain, therefore, from further invention. When once we know from God himself what his requirements are it becomes treason to debate the question any further. The statement inspired by infinite wisdom satisfies every loyal heart. What God says is to be accepted as final fact: to raise further question is a shuffling method of giving God the lie. He who still asks the road, virtually denies that God has showed it to him. It is not altogether their humility which keeps certain minds in what they call a receptive condition, never dogmatic, never confident —or, as Paul more plainly puts it, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. To me it would be high presumption not to be sure and confident when God is the teacher. To push further enquiries where revelation speaks is either to deny the revelation or to question its sufficiency. It cannot be that the declarations of God need to be supplemented by opinions, and views, and excogitations of our own. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good"; let this suffice us, and, ceasing to theorize, let us practically obey. Let us become disciples, and in this frame of mind we shall gain one of the first essentials of true worship.

True worship cannot, therefore, be will worship, and will worship cannot be true worship. We are to bring to God that which God requires of us, we are to act towards God as he commands us, and to accept from God that which he presents to us. Our approaches to the Most High are no longer to be a matter of our own taste and cleverness, but to be obedient movements of reverent faith, bowing before the solemn word of the great King. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good."

It is clear from the text before us that God has once for ever settled the way by which he is to be honoured among men; and he has declared that it is not by outward rites and ceremonies. Upon these in many Scriptures he poureth contempt when he regards them by themselves. In our text he says not a single word as to burnt offerings and calves of a year old. The question has been asked, but in his answer he makes no allusion to the rams and to the rivers of oil of which the questioner thought so much, but he says "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" It seems, then, that it is far more important to do right than to perform the most imposing religious rites; better to act mercifully than to offer the most costly sacrifices. Much more value is attached to a man's moral character than to all his outward religiousness, however far he may carry it. The upright and generous actions of daily life are better signs of a gracious heart than lavish gifts to the temple and its priests. God judges a man rather by what he doth ordinarily among his fellows than by what he doeth sumptuously when he is gorgeously arrayed in his profession, and stands in a chief place of the synagogue, and is admired as a chief speaker, or a generous giver to the holy cause. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Those who are acceptable with God are those who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him. Every man who is a true Christian *does justly*. If faith does not make a man honest, it is not an honest faith; if our conversion has not made us

upright, may the Lord convert us again. When a man's heart is right with God he longs to deal rightly with his fellow-men, and shrinks from the idea of taking undue advantage. He who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ will not knowingly and wilfully defile himself with unjust gain. To his servants, his customers, his employers, he aims to do justly. Nor is this all, for *he loves mercy*. He tries to love his neighbour as himself. If there be an act of kindness to be done, he delights to do it; if there be misery to be helped, need to be succoured, good to be bestowed, he says, "Let me have a hand in it: for it is good to me to do good." The man who is loved by the All-merciful is one who loves mercy. The God of mercy cannot take pleasure in the churlish and brutal. The hard, the cruel, the grasping, the oppressing, the sternly unforgiving, are not such as the Lord delights in.

Another point remains, it is the third thing, and it is put third because it is of the highest importance—"*to walk humbly with thy God.*" This is an inward thing, but little observed; observable enough in its consequences, but not in itself, and hence very apt to be overlooked. "To walk humbly with thy God" is as needful as to do justly and to love mercy, but few there be that find it; and hence at this time I would earnestly insist upon this vital, this essential point. I pray God the Holy Spirit to make humble walking with God to seem as important to you as it does to me, and to me as important as it does to himself, for he puts it here in the very forefront of spiritual necessities.

I. First, brethren, we may say of the humble walk which God demandeth and accepteth that IT IS EXCELLENT IN ITSELF. This is one of the things which is good, good morally, good in present effect, good in eternal results. Nothing is better for thee, O man, than to walk humbly with thy God. Notice every single word of our text, for under this head I will explain humble walking, that you may see its excellence.

Humble walking with God signifies, first, *a perception of God's being and presence.* In order to our acceptance with God we must know that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. We must recognize distinctly that there is a God, and that he is near us: that he is real and true, and that we are living in actual nearness to him. We are to walk with him, and this cannot be unless we know that he is near,—men do not walk with myths, or ideas, or remote existences. To have a real God is the backbone of character, and to keep company with him day by day is the right arm of godliness. How many live as if God were a nonentity, a dream, a theological fable, a respectable fancy, and no more: but the acceptable character is made and formed mainly by the fact that God is, and that God surrounds us. It is only in the sunlight of God's own countenance, consciously experienced, that true holiness can be produced and ripened. The godly man is moved to action, helped in endurance, nerved with courage, fired with zeal, elevated with devotion, and purified in life by the presence of God. "Thou God seest me," is a great sanctifier. The Lord said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect": there is no perfection otherwise. David said, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living": there is no other safe walking. We are never right unless God is the friend of our pilgrimage, the companion of our thoughts, the rest of our

weariness, the home of our delight, the very element of our life. Such nearness to God is good—do we know what it means?

In addition, there must be *an appropriating and accepting of this ever-present God as our God.* The text saith, "Walk humbly with *thy* God." Observe that. He must be our God. We must feel that if no other beings will worship Jehovah we will do so with our whole hearts. "This God is our God for ever and ever." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee." We believe that Jehovah is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and if no other creature through whose veins life is throbbing will own him as its God we will alone adore and worship him. We take him to be our Ruler, Leader, Law-giver, Helper, and Confidence, and if all the world shall set up other gods we will serve Jehovah alone. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This firm allegiance is good, and works towards all that is good. When a man feels that he can call God his God, and that he can take hold upon his covenant, then is he strong for honour and virtue, and all things that are pleasing unto God. Because God has entered into covenant with us in Christ Jesus, and we have given ourselves over unto him by a covenant of salt, therefore would we stand firm against temptation, and endure as seeing him who is invisible. Come, brethren, are your hearts thus fixed on God at this moment? Do your spirits walk with your God? Or are you at a distance from God, wandering away from him? Have you forgotten that God is yours? Are you looking upon him as another man's God? Oh, you cannot be strong, clear and joyous in spirit, till God is yours, and all your life is spent with him; till whether you roam, or rest, or sleep, or wake, you still abide with your own God, and find your happiness in him. As the fish abides in the ocean, and the bird in the air, and each calls the sea and the sky its own, so do we dwell in God, and he is ours for ever and ever.

This is not all, the text sets forth the accepted man as *acting ever as in the presence of his God.* "To *walk*" with God denotes an active habit, a communion in the common movements of the day. Some bow humbly before God in the hour of prayer, others sit humbly in his presence at the time of meditation, and others string themselves up to draw near to God in seasons of religious excitement, but all this falls short of walking with God. Walking is a very common pace, an ordinary rate of progress, and it does not seem to require great effort; but then it is a practical working pace, a rate at which a man can continue on and on, and make a day's journey by the time the sun is down. So walking with God means being with God always, being with God in common things, being with him on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, as well as on the Sabbath; being with him in the shop, with him in the kitchen, with him in the field, feeling his presence in buying and selling, in weighing and measuring, in ploughing and reaping—doing as unto the Lord the commonest acts of life. This it is which is acceptable with the Most High, and this is the man who has gotten into a right condition before his Maker—the man who "walks" with his God.

Then comes in the qualifying word of "*humbly,*" about which we have to speak most at this time. It was needful to remind you of the other matters first. God must be recognised as ever present, appro-[redacted]ed as our God, and felt to be a power in all our life, or else there

can be no humble walking with him. You must have the verb or there is no sense in the adverb: you must walk before there is any sense in the exhortation to walk humbly.

But now comes the humbling—*we are to live towards God in all that we do, in a lowly, reverent spirit.* We are not bidden slavishly to crouch, but humbly to walk. How lowly and penitently we are to walk let gracious men remind us. If we are favoured to walk with God as Abraham did, in all the sweet familiarity of friend with friend, yet must we remember, as he did, that we are but dust and ashes. Our closest communion must take the form of worship; when we see our Lord best, we must fall at his feet with awe. When our walk with God is closest and clearest, we must be overwhelmed with adoring wonder at the condescension which permits us to think of speaking with the Eternal One. To this reverence must be added a constant sense of dependence: walking humbly with God in the sense of daily drawing all supplies from him, and gratefully admitting that it is so. We are never to indulge a thought of independence of God, as if we were anything, or could do anything apart from him. Walking humbly with God involves a profound deference to his will, and a glad submission to it; yielding both active obedience and passive acquiescence. Humble walking with God cries, under cutting afflictions, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." When the Lord bids me serve him I must cry for grace to run in the ways of his commandments, and when the Lord chastens me I must beg for patience to endure his appointments. Walking humbly with God implies all this, and much more than just now we could state particularly. May the Holy Spirit teach us all what a broken and contrite spirit means, and keep us ever low before the Lord.

The practical result of all this inward humbling will be *an acting towards others and a moving in all matters as under the influence of a humble spirit.* If a man once really comes to live and act as in the sight of God, his life must be one of eminent holiness; and if, under a sense of God's glory, he abides in deep humility of spirit, we may expect to see about him all that is tender and quiet. Like his Lord, he will be meek and lowly in heart. He will not domineer over his fellow-men, he will not be hard, cruel, unkind; he cannot be. He who feels that he must walk with great softness and tenderness before his God, cannot trample on others as if they were only fit to be the dust of his feet. You will not see him supremely disdainful, carrying his head among the stars as though he were some great one; no, he has learned to walk humbly with God, and he thinks of himself soberly, as he ought to think. For a man to put on humility before God and throw it off before men would be hypocrisy of the vilest kind. Alas, it is too often seen, but it is base to the utmost; flee from it as you would from forgery and counterfeit, and in very truth "walk humbly with God."

I cannot tell you all that my text means, nor if you know it yourself can you make others understand it; still they will know that it is something very admirable which makes you to be a good neighbour and a considerate friend, the comfort of the sorrowful, the helper of all. They may not understand whence the quiet spirit derives its gentle dew, but they will perceive its freshness, its sparkling purity, and its goodness, and wonder at its cause. True humility begets a suavity, a gentleness, a

tenderness, a Christ-likeness, which men may mock at for awhile, but which for the most part wins their hearts. The more instructed soon take knowledge of a meek spirited man that he must have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." I do not prescribe to any man that he should try to walk humbly with his fellow-man, for without great watchfulness his spirit may glide into meanness, and he may lose conscientiousness in a desire to please; but if he will aim at walking humbly with God, he will get into such a proper spirit that he will be in his right position towards all his surroundings below and above, and his life will be such as will commend itself both to God and men.

Thus I have tried to show, while explaining what was meant by walking humbly with our God, that it is a thing most excellent in itself. O Holy Spirit, work it in us, for the lowly Saviour's sake!

II. Secondly, this walking humbly with God is very important, for IT IS A TEST OF SALVATION. The man that walks humbly with God is a saved man; the man who does not walk humbly with God should question his condition before God, for in proportion as he fails here he fails altogether. We will put a few questions concerning this matter.

Friend, if you are walking humbly with God you have taken your right place as a sinner condemned by the law; for certainly you have broken the law, and that law requires absolutely perfect obedience, which you have not rendered, and never will render. God's law, then, has condemned you—have you condemned yourself? Have you taken your place as a condemned one, and pleaded guilty before God? If you have not done so your view of yourself differs from God's view of you. Your view of yourself is a proud one, you are not walking humbly with God, and you are not saved. He that never felt himself lost never felt himself saved; he who never confessed himself guilty has never been forgiven; he who has never accepted the sentence which dooms him has never received the pardon which absolves him. Mark this!

Again, if you are walking humbly with God you have given Jesus Christ his right place. What is that? He came into the world to be the Saviour of sinners, and the only place he will deign to occupy towards you is that he shall save you, and save you completely. Some say, "Yes, oh yes. Jesus shall be my Saviour, and do somewhat toward my salvation." But he replies, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Christ will save us from the beginning to the end, or he will have nothing to do with our salvation. He will have all the glory of the work, and the work itself must be all his own, from the foundation to the top stone, or else he will leave the ruin upon its own heap. Jesus will never consent to be a make-weight for our deficiencies. He will not come at our beck and call, to be our lackey, to patch up our old rags, and mend our clouted shoes. No; the Lord Jesus Christ must be everything and we must be nothing, or we shall never agree. Have you given Christ his due place, dear friend? If you have not done so your view of Christ and God's view of Christ are very different, and yours is a proud view, for you are putting yourself into the Saviour's place in some degree, and you are not walking humbly with God. It is dangerous to the last degree to be pushing the Lord of glory into a corner, that we may occupy his throne. The Lord our God is a jealous God, and he is

specially jealous of the prerogatives of his Son, and if we are so vain as to rob Christ of his glory, and trick ourselves out in stolen honours, we shall quickly incur his hot displeasure. When our heart feels that the blood and righteousness of Jesus constitute her only plea, then is she walking rightly and humbly with God, and all is well.

One other question is a very important one,—is salvation seen by you to be wholly of grace? Do you, my friend, judge salvation to be partly by your own works and merits? Do you think that you must at least contribute an ounce weight in the scale, that you must add at least a fraction to the Saviour's lump sum? Ay, then, it is a question whether you know anything about salvation. I do not want to make doctrinal opinions a test, but it does seem to me that there is something wrong in the heart which looks for salvation anywhere but to the free favour of God. To walk humbly with God is to feel "If ever such a poor, condemned soul as I am shall be saved it must be by an act of free and sovereign mercy, for if justice hath its way apart from mercy I am driven for ever into the darkness of despair." I am come to this pass myself, that if salvation be at all of myself, if any merit be required of me, though it be little as the small dust of the balance, or the drop that trembles in the bucket after it is turned upside down, I cannot find it. Grace must save me, or I am lost. When the soul has come to that pass it is walking humbly with God, but those who are even in a small degree out of the circle of grace are not walking humbly with God, and they have grave cause to question their spiritual state.

This suggests to me another thought: I know several persons, who seem to be seeking peace with God and mercy in Christ, who never get it because, as it seems to me, they are not walking humbly with God as to their *intellect*. The last thing that some men will do is ever to bow their understanding to the teaching of God. They are always carping and raising quibbles with God instead of believing him. They need to be silenced, as Job was before the manifested glory of God, or they will die asking questions. Those mysterious truths which relate to the Most High such creatures as we are can never expect to understand. In the region of the infinite there is ample space for faith, but reason loses her track. Faith is our privilege, let us exercise it freely towards the Lord. In God's great family is the comprehension of the Father's mind to be a *sine quâ non* of our affection for him? Am I never to believe what my Father tells me till I understand it? Must all thy gold, great God, be tried in my crucible before I will accept it at thy hand? Art thou a liar except my brain prove thee true? Am I after all to be lord over my own thoughts, and art thou to have no supremacy in the kingdom of my mind? Does any man fancy that his soul can ever be right while this is his theory? How can the heart stand in an even place and be at peace, while it refuses to own the sway of God? We must yield our intellect to the superior intellect, permitting the drop to be borne along by the river. The infallible speech of him who cannot err must satisfy the obedient mind. To the true heart there is no self-denial in agreeing that omniscience shall stand instead of personal discovery, infallible revelation in the place of research and argument, and the witnessing Spirit in the room of authority and evidence. Every word of God is surer than the most certain deductions

of mathematics or the clearest inferences of reasoning. God's slightest hint, though it come not to a positive declaration, is to be treasured up by us as a priceless gem. Well doth the apostle say, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." There is more light in God's darkness than in man's light; his every word is infallible, but as for the thoughts of man, he knoweth that they are vanity.

This seems to be a test, then, by which we may try whether we are saved or not. Are we walking humbly with God or not? Are we trying to be something, to do something, to think something, or in some way or other to let it be manifest that we are not to be overlooked? If so, there is great fear that we are not yet right with heaven. God saith, "I am, and there is none beside me." Do we consent to shrink into nothingness, or are we eager to cry out, "I, too, am something; I must not be ignored, for I have my right and claims which may not be forgotten." Beloved, I delight to hear the divine voice crying "I am," and to run and hide myself beneath the eternal wings, cowering down beneath them, even as the little chicks hide beneath the mother, and are as though they were not apart from her. It is good to shrink into a happy insignificance, to feel that we are nothing, save only as we are hidden away with Christ in God. God is; and as for our existence it is but that of God displaying itself in us: we are nothing, God is all in all. When we are thus humbled we are saved. What is there to be lost? The eternal burnings of the divine greatness have consumed the vainglory of the creature, and that which remains has no cause to fear. With this man will God dwell for ever on terms of peace, even with him who is of a humble and a contrite spirit, and trembles at his word.

III. I must pass on very briefly to say, in the third place, of walking humbly with God, that IT IS A SYMPTOM OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. You can tell, dear friend, not only whether you are saved, but afterwards whether your new life is in a growing state, by examining whether you are walking humbly with God. Let me dwell upon that matter for a minute. We are healthy in soul if we have lowly views in reference to ourselves upon *matters of divine grace*. Come, now, what do you think of yourself this morning? Are you a fine fellow, a disciple indeed, an example to others? Do you now account yourself to be a very experienced Christian, quite a useful member of the church, an ornament to society, a person considerably looked up to, and well worthy of a large measure of respect? It would be very improper to put you in a back seat, or invite you to take a lower room, for are you not a prince in Israel? Among those who might be counted as pillars, you feel that you must be mentioned. But have a care what you are at! It is very easy to feel great. It is by no means an eminently difficult thing to be exalted; I have reached that point myself without great effort, and I take no credit, but much shame, for it. A sense of rising to be somebody is not a sign of health, it is a token of the reverse sometimes, and may be the forerunner of most solemn catastrophes. Puffing up may mean bloating and swelling with deadly humours, therefore beware of it. Signs of health lie in quite another line. Will you try and follow me for a minute in a humbling meditation? Remember what you were a little while ago. Then the thought that you would even be a member of the church of Christ seemed too good for you! If anyone

had said, "You will be numbered with God's people, you will enjoy with them the sweets of pardoning grace," you would have said, "Then I do not care where they put me; if I am only one of the dogs under the Master's table, I shall be perfectly satisfied to eat the crumbs." Like the prodigal, we were ready to cry, "Make me as one of thy hired servants": so long as we might but eat the bread from the Father's table we had no care for honour. Ah, you did not think you would be such a big man as you are now, did you? When you filled the swine trough, and fed the unclean, yourself hungry and faint, you had no idea to what you would grow. God grant you may have every particle of boasting removed from you at this time, as you remember the hole of the pit from which you were quarried. Taken from the dunghill, and placed among princes, let our grateful hearts renounce all self-glory, and magnify the Lord.

Another set of reflections may rise up on considering what you now are. What are you now? At your best what are you to boast of? You are thought by others to be something very great and respectable, but what are the facts of the case as God sees them? You are a branch of the true vine—yes, how much fruit do you bear? Compare yourself with those branches that bring forth much fruit to God: how thin and lean is your vintage! You are weighed down by the responsibilities which your position thrusts upon you, but are you bearing them worthily? Are you doing for God what some would do if they had your opportunities? Are you doing for Christ what once you thought you would do if you ever had the means? Are you now living according to your own notion of how a Christian should live—are you anywhere near it? Oh, my brother, when you think of what you are now, there is more to make you blush than to make you boast; more to make you cover your face than to cause you to lift up your head. At least, such is my case.

Once more, I beg you to think of what you would be within a very short time if you were left by divine grace. We sometimes condemn men for their acts, and are right in condemning them, and yet if we had been in their position we might have done much worse. "Oh," saith one, "what a mercy it is I have been kept these thirty years, and have never dishonoured my profession!" Yes, brother, it is a mercy, a great mercy, a greater mercy than you dream. You do not happen to have a vixen of a wife, or a troublesome family, or a provoking neighbour, or you would have lost your character long ago. Domestic comfort may more deserve praise than any goodness on your part. It is a mercy for you that the evil person who used to have such influence over you was taken away, or else I do not know where you would have been; many an evil character has been the result of vicious influence. A great deal of apparent virtue may be due to our not happening to be tempted at the time when we are in a certain condition, or else if our tinder and the devil's sparks had met who knows but what the best of us might have been ablaze by now? Oh, how much we owe to preventing grace! We are debtors both to the providence and the grace of God which have kept us out of harm's way. When sometimes we have been compelled to condemn sin in a brother, and to speak very solemnly, as we are bound to do, we have remembered ourselves lest we also should be tempted, and

we have remembered that grace alone has kept us out of sin. "Such an one was drunk," says one, "after making a profession of religion." We do not exonerate him for a moment, it was a shameful crime, but oh, my friend, had you been precisely in his condition, had you been once a victim to that degrading vice, met by the same company, and in other respects surrounded as he was, you might have been intoxicated long before he became so—who knows? Walk humbly with your God at any rate, my friend. The true way to live is to give God all glory and take to ourselves all shame.

When God gives us great temporal enjoyments, then let us think, "Why do I have these comforts while many of his servants are without them? Is it possible that he is giving me my portion in this life?" That will lay a cool hand on your hot forehead and forbid all pride in wealth. If God makes you rich, instead of doting on your riches say to yourself, "How can I best use my substance for his glory?" The working out of that practical question should be quite sufficient to keep you from self-esteem. He who truly serves the Lord will walk humbly with him. Have you more talent than other people? You will be a great fool if you begin to rejoice in it, for serious responsibilities come with special ability. Remember you have to do more for God than other people, and that thought should by God's grace be as ballast for your wide-spread sail. Great talent might be a sun to smite you if a sense of responsibility did not come in like a cloud to shield you.

Are you honoured among men? Then say to yourself, "Ah, they do not know me, or they might judge me otherwise. If I deserve their esteem for some things yet there are many things which make me hang my head." If we deserve all the gratitude of our fellows yet we should be deeply anxious not to take a grain of praise to ourselves lest God should be angry with us for robbing him of his revenue of glory. What have we that we have not received?

We must always have lowly views of ourselves before God in regard to matters of grace; and it should be the same *in reference to his providence*. For instance, if one of you shall have been much tried in business, and have lost much money,—suppose you are angry with God and quarrel with him about it, is that walking humbly with him? When we repine at the loss of children or friends, is not that the pride of our heart? To walk humbly with God would lead you to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!" but a proud heart virtually cries, "God shall do as I like, or else he shall have no obedience from me. He shall always use his right hand, and pour into my lap all that I desire, or else we will part company." It is the hypocrite who will not always call upon God; a little trial cools his love. Ah, friend, this will not do. Repining and rebelling are not walking humbly with God. Humbly walking with God yields itself up entirely to the divine will, and saith, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Humbly walking with God will enable a man to receive providences from God without expecting to understand why they came. "I cannot comprehend," says a man, "why in the very midst of my usefulness I am laid aside." Is God bound to tell you why? When you demand an

explanation, are you walking humbly with God? Has the father to tell his little son the reason for everything he does? Is that the way you govern your family? Are you cross-questioned by chits in pinafores? No, my brethren, fathers have their honour, and much more our heavenly Father. God giveth no account of his matters. It is a part of my humbly walking with God to accept providences of which I cannot see the object or design, and to be grateful for them. When God sends, as it seems to us, the wrong providence, when he does to us that which seemeth unwise and unkind, we are still to say, "He must be good to Israel, and all his dealings must be wise and kind. I am but as a wild ass's colt, and know nothing, and can judge nothing: God knoweth all things, and let his will be done." This is to walk humbly with him.

If the Lord turns his hand and multiplies your treasure, and gives you the bright and sunny days, the elastic step and cheery heart, take heed that you then walk humbly with him. It is easy to think something of yourself when the purse is bulky; but fling away such folly. Hold your possessions loosely, and say, "Lord, I am grateful for these, but if thou dost in the future take them away, I will not murmur. I do not suspend my love to thee upon these outward things; I love thee for thyself, and for thy richer grace. My love is not held by the tenure of thy favouring me with health and strength; I will trust thee though thou slay me. Though thou take all away, out of the very dust will I still praise thee."

I think I have thus shown that it is a symptom of spiritual health when a man can walk humbly with God.

IV. And now, fourthly, we may say of this humble walking that IT IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ANXIETY. We must walk humbly, my brothers and sisters, but this is more easily said than done. This is no child's play. Humility of spirit is a virtue which is likely to be overlooked: we pay some attention to doing justly and loving mercy, but walking humbly with God is so inward, so ethereal, and so spiritual that we are apt to overlook it: yet it is the main thing, and all our thoughts should go to the securing of it. You may, if you will, give all your substance to the poor, and your bodies to be burned, but if you walk not humbly with God you have missed the essence of godliness. It is easy enough to keep up private devotion, and family devotion, and public devotion, and to be regular at sacraments and sermons, and to be everything that is moral, and just, and upright, and yet after all not to be walking humbly with God, and therefore a failure here is highly probable, but none the less terrible. Humble walking is so difficult to come at that thousands sit down content with that which looks like it, but is by no means the same thing. It is so easy to think yourself humble. To feign humility is of all things most shocking, and yet to be truly humble is of all things most difficult. Have you never noticed how, when you fancied you were lowly before God, it was only that you were unbelieving or out of health? Do not mistake dyspepsia for humility. When you said to yourself, "Now I am on familiar terms with God, and living near him in communion," it turned out to be rather presumption than faith; and supposed humility has in like manner full often condensed into despair. Are you now saying, "I think I am humble?" Is there ever a time when a man is so proud as when he judges that he is humble? "Ah," say you, "but I cannot exalt myself, I am in such

a condition of heart I must walk humbly with God." My beloved, I beseech you be more on your guard now than ever against pride, for a haughty spirit lurks in an assurance of humility, like a lion in its den. The leaven of self is brought into our meal in the measure of a supposed necessity of humbleness. To be really lowly, really nothing before God, really to yield yourselves up to him, this is such a work and such a difficulty, that I commend you to attempt it in order that you may see how impossible it is to you apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, who alone can help us to walk humbly with God.

V. With this I close, when I have said in the fifth place, in praise of walking humbly with God, that IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE DEEPEST CONCEIVABLE PLEASURE. If you walk humbly with God you will feel safe. What can harm the man who sits at the feet of the great Lord, and waits his will? Ah! now you feel that, happen what may, nothing can harm you, for you are ready to bow before it, and let the Lord alone reign. What peace it gives when you feel that if there be anything about you which grieves your God you will gladly let it go, you have already surrendered it, you would not retain it for an hour. The tempest rolls overhead, but all is calm below when the heart has learned full surrender, and is even as a weaned child. Your spirit must rest then, it cannot help resting, for it dwells in God.

Into this quietness and rest there comes enjoyment, for the man that leaves everything to God finds joy in everything. Mercies which to others are commonplace are sweet to him; he wonders at the love which God displays in them all. As mercies come to him he receives them with songs of thankfulness: he is grateful to think that he has bread to eat and raiment to put on, for he knows how unworthy he is; and when great mercies are showered on him he sits down before God and cries, "Whence is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house?" He is the man who joins Mary in her Magnificat, singing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." He sings with the psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." He sits at heaven's gate waiting to enter, and he shall not long be detained outside, for as joy and peace and a heavenly mind have come to him so shall they soon bring him to their own home. He who has learned to walk humbly with God shall soon see the face of God in his glory. God teach us all this sacred art, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxiii., Micah vi. 1—9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—90, 704, 705.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

RARE FRUIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace."—Isaiah lvii. 19.

"THE fruit of the lips"! The lips are neither trees of the orchard nor herbs of the garden. What fruit can they bear? The scattering of Babel came of human speech when languages were multiplied, and the united race split up into fragments. Wars and fightings, and hatred and bloodshed have sprung of talk and bluster: these are deadly fruits, the very mention of which brings pain to the heart,—surely it is in vain to look for much that is worth gathering to mouths and tongues. Great talkers are proverbially little doers, and the more talk the less work. We may come for years looking for fruit on this fig-tree and find none. "Nothing but leaves" will be gathered by those who look to the lips for a harvest to fill the barn. This is most true. If you let the lips alone they produce mischief and trouble, and not much else. An unrenewed tongue is worse almost than an unregenerate heart, because bad as the heart may be there is heart in it; the tongue is often heartless, a mere sounding sham with no reality to support its brazen noise. Too many speak with the lips, and their heart is not in what they say. If the lips become the instruments of hypocrisy, and if the fruit of the lips be *only* the fruit of the lips, it is comparable to the apples of Sodom. The lips, moreover, cause pain and evil all around, which the heart alone cannot do. The heart is as an oven closed up; the tongue is a fire raging abroad, setting on flame the course of nature when it is itself set on fire of hell. The lips of the wicked are like the upas tree, which drips poison.

We could readily dispense with the fruit of the lips as it comes from uncircumcised and unclean lips. Go out and gather a basketful of the fruit of the lips,—gossiping, bickering, fault-finding, murmuring, nonsense, vanity, falsehood, boasting, infidelity. I will not tell you all that I might put into that basket. Certainly, if it were to be shred and poured out into the broth of daily life, we should soon have to say as they did who threw the wild cucumber into the pottage, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." The fruit of the lips tendeth to vanity,

to poverty, to sorrow, to shame, to death. The fruit of the lips is just what the root of an unrenewed, unregenerate heart causes it to be. You know Æsop, and how wisely he kept his master's command when he bade him provide for dinner the best things he could, and when they came together he set out tongues—nothing else but tongues. His master was pleased with his wit, though I am afraid the guests did not relish it, and he ordered him the next time to provide for dinner the worst things he possibly could. Tongues again—nothing else but tongues! Truly Æsop was wise there, for the fruit of the lips is sometimes the best thing in the world, and sometimes the worst thing in the world: it is a blessing and a curse, according to the man whose tongue speaketh. The fruit of the lips may be compared to Jeremiah's figs—the good, very good, but the bad, exceeding bad, exceeding naughty figs, that cannot be eaten. Fruit of the lips, what shall I say about thee? It might seem that the less we said the better, lest in our case also the fruit of the lips should add to the useless heap.

Our text tells us that God creates the fruit of the lips; but this must be understood, of course, with a reservation. He does not create the fruit of the lips as we commonly see it, but the good fruit, the true fruit, the fruit worth gathering, that which *should be* the fruit of the lips—of this God is the Creator. Because the natural fruit is so evil it needs the Creator again to step in, and make us new creatures, and our fruit new also, or else it will remain so bad that the verdict upon it must be "Vanity of vanities, all is vanities." And what is that fruit which the Creator produces from a source which is naturally so barren? First of all, it is the sacrifice of *thanksgiving*—"the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb. xiii. 15.) The fruit of the lips which God creates should be, above all things, *praise*. We ought to delight to praise God: it should be our element, our occupation, our recreation, our very life. We are as much and as evidently intended to praise God as angels are. When I look at a bird, if I study it awhile, I am convinced that it was made to sing. When we look at an angel, and study his formation and character, we are certain that he was ordained to praise God; and he that studies man, if he can see beyond the defects which the fall has brought upon every organ, will be forced to see that he is a creature adapted for the praise of God. Our tongue is the glory of our frame, and it is given us that we may give glory to him who framed it. Articulate speech, which is denied to birds and beasts, is given to us for this major reason—that we may articulately and distinctly praise and magnify the name of the Most High. O man, however eloquent in oratory or charming in song thy lips may be, they are fruitless if thou dost not therewith extol thy Maker! Thy lips are as dry Sahara sand, or as the salt deserts, where not a blade of grass can live, if from them there never springs the sweet flower of gratitude to God, fragrantly expressing itself in words of love. Thy lips should drop as the honeycomb; a gentle dew of thankfulness should distil from them. They should be like the rose, sending forth perpetual perfume; each word should be a fragrant leaf, scattering a sweet smell of adoration. The lips should be the gates of thankfulness, and from between them there should continually pour forth a wealthy traffic of song, bearing abroad

the products of a grateful heart, wrought in the forges of glowing thankfulness to God.

Another fruit of the lips should never be forgotten, and that is *prayer*. This should be the fruit of renewed manhood at every age; the lips of little children can compass prayer, and the mouth of the aged may not fail to utter it. This is a God-created fruit; he that abounds in it is as a vine which God has blessed. Woe unto the mouth which is silent at the mercy-seat, for it will one day be dumb at the judgment-seat! Those lips are cursed that never pray. Those lips shall blister with unutterable pain that never pray. "Behold, he prayeth," is an absolutely necessary sign of the possession of grace in the heart. True praise never flowered from those lips upon which prayer has never blossomed. Be ye sure of this, that prayer and praise are grapes of the same cluster, and the lips which are barren of the one are bare of the other. These two fruits of the lips God creates wherever his grace enters.

Furthermore, when there is prayer and praise in us, another fruit of the lip is *testimony*. Do you produce this, dear friends? Has God created it from your lips? It is the bearing witness to others of what God can do, because you have received it in your own experience. God blesses us on purpose that we may tell other poor souls how he can bless the sons of men; and yet there are Christians—at least, I hope they are Christians—who appear to have received great mercy from God, but they keep the matter hidden. Oh! be not such, I pray you. If you have good tidings in your heart, bring forth the fruit of the lip and tell it. "I should stammer," says one. There is a great beauty in the stammering of earnestness. "I could never be eloquent," says one. Yet there is much true eloquence where there is no appearance of it: when a man cannot speak his heart, it matters not if you can read in his face that he would speak with the tongues of angels if he could, for he feels that his theme transcends his utmost ability. Fine words are not forceful; it is the heart which prevaileth. Tell thy neighbour that Jesus died; tell thy neighbour that Jesus came into the world to save sinners; tell thy neighbour he is welcome to Christ; tell thy neighbour Christ hath saved *thee*. Do not hesitate to tell him of thine own tasting and handling of the good word of life, for this is a most profitable fruit of the lips. What is so likely to prevail with a man as brotherly testimony? How can we so surely attract men to Canaan as by showing its Eshcol clusters, setting them forth with earnest speech, as the Holy Ghost enables us? These discourses of mine are the fruit of my lips. I cannot tell you how much I wish they were more worthy of my Master's honour; but, such as they are, you all have the benefit of them, and they lay you under an obligation to yield your fruit unto others. I am not called to bear witness alone, and when I have borne my fruit, and you are refreshed, it is your bounden duty to go and bring forth the like fruit for the refreshment of others. Thus much about the threefold fruit of the lips.

Now, there is one renowned topic upon which the lips ought always to be able to speak, and that blessed subject is summed up in the two words of my text, "Peace, peace." "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace." The lips ought to be occupied with the subject of peace; this should be their breath: as Saul breathed out threatenings,

so should we breathe out peace, and yet again peace, a double peace from our two lips. From the mouth of truth should come kisses of peace, words of peace, the breath of peace. This is the best lip-salve—"Peace, peace." Nothing can so sweeten the breath as "Peace, peace." Nothing can so flavour the palate and delight the heart as this "Peace, peace," felt within, and breathed without. No teeth of ivory, nor lips of coral, are complete in loveliness till over all there glistens the brightness of peace. Fierce speech becomes not loveliness, and threatening and clamour destroy beauty, but the charm of the lips is peace. So I am going to take those two words and recommend them to you as a fruit of the lips which God creates; and may the Lord help us all to go out of this place with this on our lips—"Peace, peace."

I. We shall employ these words in four ways, and we shall commence by using them as THE CRY OF THE AWAKENED.

When men are awakened by the grace of God into a consciousness of their true condition they find themselves at war with God and at war with their own consciences, and consequently they begin to cry, "Peace, peace": longing eagerly to end the dreadful conflict in which they find themselves engaged. While a man is dead in trespasses and sins, where nature left him, and where the devil keeps him, he has a deadly calm of mind. He is not troubled; he has no bonds in his death, should he die, and none in his life while he is drunken with sin. He is like a brute beast, looking no further than to the pasture in which he feeds: he lives for the present, and, as long as his bodily wants are satisfied, he is content. When the Spirit of God arouses in him thoughts about higher things, the whole matter is changed; he thinks of God, and laments that he has forgotten his Maker. He thinks of that Maker's law, and perceives that he has constantly broken it; indeed, he has never regarded it, but treated it as a thing of nought. He thinks of death, and he says, "I must die, but I am unprepared." He thinks of eternity, of that other world, that lasting world beyond time, that world where we must dwell for ever, and he cries, "Where shall I dwell? and where will my portion be?" He feels it cannot be amongst the sanctified, for he is not one of them. He cannot hope to see the face of God with joy, for he has never sought that face, nor cared for the knowledge of God's ways. As he begins thinking of these high themes, conscience sets before his mind the day of judgment: he sees the heavens on a blaze, and the great Judge calling all men to account: and he is sore troubled. He sees heaven open and all its glory, but he fears that he will be excluded, for he has been a rebel against the Lord; he looks down to hell with all its terror, and it seems to gape for him, as for one most suitable to be its everlasting prey. Do you wonder, then, if the man is tormented with intestine strife, and with horror of a war without? He has no rest, and he cries "Peace, peace": the cry only echoes in his ear, for what peace can there be to him? Very likely a worldling comes along and says, "You are melancholy. Do not give way to such low spirits. I count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away. Come with me where they make merry." He goes; but, somehow or other, he sees that all the gold is gilt, and all the finery is flimsy, and that there is nothing in the mirth. The sport is tame and dull to him, and he himself is duller than ever.

He does not enjoy what once was the delight of his eyes; he comes away, and when they ask him to visit their haunts again he says, "No, no. My heart seems heavier there than when I am alone." "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart." There is no suitability in worldly merry-making to ease a tortured spirit. The awakened sinner cries, "Peace, peace. Oh that I had peace."

Then there visits him one who knowingly whispers, "You need not disturb yourself. These things are not so. Do you not know that these are all bugbears of a past generation? We men of modern thought have made great discoveries, and changed all the fears of our benighted ancestors into a brave unbelief. You can live at ease. Do not fret yourself about sin, or heaven, or hell, or eternity." Vain are these stale scepticisms, the man is too much in earnest to be drugged with such soporifics. Boastful unbelief has small power over an agonized soul. God himself has convinced this man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and though he tries to disbelieve he cannot. Conviction haunts him, follows him into his chamber, robs him of his rest, and he cries, "I fain would be an unbeliever if I could, but I cannot. Oh that I had peace! Oh that I had peace!"

Mr. Worldly Wiseman calls upon him, with his friend Dr. Legality, and his assistant-surgeon Mr. Civility, and these try their Balm of Conceit, and Plaister of Natural Goodness. Dr. Legality finds his patient disturbed with the threatenings of the gospel and the doctrines of Holy Writ, and he says, "These things are quite true, but you need not worry, because you have not been so bad as a great many, and if it goes hard with you it will go very hard with the most of people. You are all right, for you have been honest, obliging, generous, and religious." Ay, but if God has been dealing with this man, he will say, "But I am not all right. I feel that I deserve the wrath of God, and that goodness is not in me. You may think it is so, but I know myself, and I have looked into my heart, and I find all manner of evil there. Oh that I had peace! Oh that I had peace!" Self-righteousness is too short a bed for an awakened sinner to stretch himself thereon, neither can flatterers cajole him into a peace based upon forgetfulness of the divine law.

Then comes the priest, and he exclaims, "Come with us, and undergo ceremonies, and take sacraments, and we will ease you of your burden." Perhaps the poor man tries this, but though he tries it he finds no rest whatever. No, the leprosy lies deep within, and no outward form can cleanse away the deep-seated pollution. The burden presses on his heart, and therefore no manipulation of outward rites can remove the heavy load from him. His cry is, "Peace, peace, peace, peace! Oh that I could get it! Oh that I could get it! I would search through earth, and sea, and air, and hell itself, if I might find it, and bless the grave if it would give it me." Dear heart, I sympathize with you. I remember when I would have gone to the utmost verge of this green earth if I could have found peace. I tell you, racks and tortures I would have boldly endured; prison-houses and dungeons I would have bravely entered, and battle and death I would have gladly encountered, if I could have found peace from my accusing conscience; but I found none. I was like that serpent which is said to sting itself to death.

"My thoughts," as George Herbert says, "were all a case of knives." Every motion of my mind seemed to drive a dagger into my heart. A volcano had burst up within my soul, and the burning lava of despair flowed over all. I was no fool, nor was I under a delusion. I think I was never saner than at that dread period of my life; certainly I was never more seriously in earnest. I was not a simpleton scared at his own shadow, but I had cause to be disquieted, for actual guilt was upon me; not that I was worse than others in outward sin, but that I had such a sight and sense of my guiltiness that I could only cry out, "Woe is me! Oh, wretched man that I am!" Then my daily prayer was, "Peace, peace!" but I could not find it. This is a good cry, however, for every awakened spirit. I would put it into the mouth of every penitent: rather may the Lord himself create it there as the fruit of the lips. "Peace, peace."

II. Secondly, our theme is much more cheerful when we see that this is THE ANSWER OF THE SAVIOUR.

It is the fruit of the Saviour's lips, whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. It is he that comes to a soul and says, "Peace, peace." Oh, did you ever see him *as dying of sin?* If you have never seen him with the eye of faith you do not know what peace means. After this fashion he shows himself. He looks upon the sinner, troubled and tossed to and fro, and he says, "What aileth thee?" "My sin," says the sinner, "has utterly condemned me." "Dost thou not know that I bore it eighteen hundred years ago and more, in my own body on the tree?" "Yes, Lord, I have heard that thou didst something of the kind, but didst thou bear it so that I need not bear it?" Then the Redeemer shows that he bore the burden of guilt effectually and carried it away into the land of forgetfulness: and, moreover, he makes clear the truth that if he took our sin, it can never be laid on us, for it is not consistent with the Father's justice first to punish the Substitute for sin and then to punish the offender also. That were to make a mockery of Christ Jesus by making him a Substitute and then punishing those for whom he stood as a Surety. Dost thou see that, poor soul? Is it not clear enough that if the Surety is sued for the debt, and is made to discharge it, the original debtor is free? Rest in the fact that this is the believer's case.

"But," says the heart, "my Lord, I know that thou didst die. I see thy wounds, I mark thy open side, but tell me, didst thou die for me in particular?" "Wilt thou trust me, soul? Wilt thou trust me wholly?" "Ah! that I will, my Lord." "Then I bore thy sin. I was punished in thy stead. Thy iniquity has ceased to be. Thy sins I have cast into the depths of the sea. Thy transgression shall never be mentioned against thee any more for ever. Go, and sin no more. Peace, peace!" What can break a peace like this? Why need I fret about sin which is hurled into oblivion? Why should I despair because of my guilt, and reckon myself condemned? I am not condemned, for Jesus was condemned for me—even he in whom my spirit fixes all her trust. He paid my debts, and discharged my liability to justice, and therefore my soul is clear. Peace, peace! Was there ever peace like this? Glory be to my Redeemer for such rest. Truly a God has given us this repose.

"O thou who didst thy glory leave
Apostate sinners to retrieve
From nature's deadly fall,
Me thou hast purchased with a price,
Nor shall my crimes in judgment rise,
For thou hast borne them all."

But did you ever see Christ as he is *risen from the dead?* Here is another vision of consolation, another fount of peace. The poor heart lies prostrate at the Saviour's feet and cries, "I see thee, my Lord; I see how thou hast put away my sin, and I am at peace; but alas! I am a poor fool, and shall sin again, and I have a wayward, wandering heart that will soon be away over the mountains leaping into sin again. How can I hope to enter heaven?" To this the Lord Jesus replies most sweetly, "Dost thou not know that I am risen from the dead? I am he that liveth, though once I died for sin. I am that great Shepherd who lives to take care of his own flock. Because I live thou shalt live also. I am able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by me, seeing I ever live to make intercession for them." Do you know the peace which the resurrection of the Lord Jesus brings into the spirit? If so, you find rich fruit hanging upon Jesus' lips. He who knows the virtue of the living Lord at once concludes that the future is as safe as the past. The slain Saviour has slain our past sin, and the living Saviour lives to take care of our eternal life, and to bring us to God's right hand at the last. See how Jesus says, "Peace, peace, peace! All is well."

Did you ever see Jesus as he sits there *triumphant at the Lord God's right hand?* I hope you have; because a poor, tried spirit is greatly comforted by that sight. The downcast one exclaims, "My Lord, I know thou wilt take care of me here, for I perceive that thou livest to provide for me; but I shall have to die, and what shall I then do? My Lord, I am afraid to die. It is grim work—dying. It is a path I never trod before. What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?" Jesus answers such fears in his own sweet fashion by saying, "Dost thou not know that I am risen from the dead, and that I have gone into the glory to prepare a place for thee? I will come to thee at the last, and I will take thy spirit away to dwell with me for ever. Thou needest not fear to die, for he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I will help thee. Death shall be no death to thee. I will catch thy soul away and thou shalt never know it till thou seest me face to face. As for thy poor dust, it shall lie in the grave a little while, but I will take care of every atom of it, and when I shall descend in the latter day upon the earth, my archangel shall sound his trumpet, and thy poor body shall rise again, only more fair and beautiful than when thou hadst it in its best estate below, and so thou shalt be for ever with the Lord, both as to body and soul." Does not this breathe, "Peace, peace, peace"?

"Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace How calm his exit!
Night dews fall not more calmly on the ground,
Nor weary worn out winds expire so soft."

If I were to go on picturing our glorious Lord Jesus Christ in any, and all of his relationships to us, we should in each case hear him say, "Peace, peace." His voice is the sovereign balm which heals every wound, the cordial which removes every fear. No distress or amazement can seize upon you, for which in Christ there is not a peace that passeth all understanding, to keep your heart and soul against all dread and downcasting. This is the fruit of the lips of the Well-beloved —peace, peace, peace. If you do not come to him, you will receive no peace; if you do not keep near him, you will retain no peace; and if you do not come growingly nearer and nearer to him, you will miss much of peace that you might have. Abide in Christ Jesus, and let him abide in you, and you shall have abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

A soldier in the Crimean war, as he lay dying, was visited by a worthy missionary. The young man asked his visitor to read a chapter to him, and the chapter chosen was John xiv. When he came to this verse— "Peace I leave with you," the soldier was almost in the article of death, but he said to the reader, "Sir, that is the peace which I enjoy. I have had it for years." "Peace I leave with you." "Now," he said, "if I have known this peace—and I have had it for years—I shall not lose it *now*, but shall die triumphantly." And so he did. Can you, my hearer, say to-night that you have that peace? If you have it now you shall have it in your dying hour. Could you say what Dr. Watts said to his host, Sir Thomas Abney? He said, "Sir Thomas, I thank God that for many a month I have been able to say, 'It is a matter of perfect indifference to me, when I fall asleep at night, whether I wake up in this world or in another.'" I well remember reading the old story of a Methodist, who was pressed into the army some fifty or sixty years ago, who had his leg carried away in battle, and lay bleeding on the ground. When they carried him off the field he said, "I am as happy as a man can be while out of heaven." They said he was mad. O for more of such glorious madness. To be able to say when your limb is shot away, and you are bleeding away your life, "I am as happy as a man can be out of heaven," why there is something in that surely! This must be the finger of God. Where else can such triumph over pain and weakness be found? What voice but that of Jesus can in such a storm command a heavenly calm? Jesus, Master, whose message to thy people is always "Peace, peace," speak thou that divine word to me, and to all thy troubled ones. Stand in our midst and say, "Peace be unto you," and peace shall be ours.

III. Thirdly, I am going to use these words as THE SONG OF THE TRUE BELIEVER.

He who has really seen Christ, and placed his trust in him, can now sing, "Peace, peace, peace." What a thrice accursed thing is war! I believe with Benjamin Franklin that there never was a good war, and there never was a bad peace. War is unmitigated mischief from end to end, and peace is a thing to rejoice at, take it in whatever light you will. Killing and slaying, devastating and burning, are sport for fiends, and for fiends alone. True men, if once called to battle, are the last persons who would lightly enter upon it again. It is an awful and terrible thing. I recollect reading that when the last great war was

over—I mean the great war of all, in which we were so long engaged with the Buonapartes—news of the peace came to a certain town. It was only gently whispered that there was peace, but it was all over the town in a few minutes. Everybody ran through the streets. Bread had been sent up to an awful price by the war, and everybody was weary with the taxes, the slaughter of soldiers, and the perpetual fear of invasion. A man ran down the street shouting, "Peace, peace, peace, peace," and everybody was glad. All manner of good things were wrapped up in the one word "peace": families would no more be divided, trade would no longer be crippled, famine would no more devour the land. Now the loaf would be within the reach of the poor and the hungry; and the widow might keep her sons at home, safe from the cannon's mouth. "Peace, peace," they cried; and within an hour there were bells ringing from every steeple, and as the sun went down there were candles in every window. Everybody must have an illumination because peace had come. Now, if peace be so precious as to temporal things, it is equally precious as to eternal things; and if a man has once seen Jesus Christ, it is the joy of his life to sing, "Peace, peace." Here stands the reconciled man, and he looks up to heaven through the pure blue air, past yon stars, endless leagues beyond imagination's utmost stretch: he looks up, and his mind conceives of God, and his heart feels, "I am at peace with him. Though he be a consuming fire, I am at peace with him. With the great Father I am at peace. Though it is very tempestuous round about him, yet I am at peace with him. I am at peace with the eternal Son: though he shall break his enemies with a rod of iron, he will never break me; I am at peace with him. I am at peace with the Holy Ghost, for though to blaspheme him is death without hope of mercy, yet I am at peace with him: he will never destroy me." What a peace is this!—peace with God, the peace of God, perfect peace. Having this peace, every angel is my friend, every cherub is my guardian; and all the hosts in glittering ranks above, of spirits angelic and unfallen, and of spirits human, saved and washed in the blood, are all my friends, for I have peace with the armies of heaven if I have peace with the Lord of hosts. How delightful to look all around you, and to feel confident that providence is on your side! The wheels are stupendous, and the results that come of their revolution are mysterious and terrible; but let the wheels revolve, they cannot hurt a child of God. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. There is peace in all events when there is peace with heaven. The beasts of the field are in league with us, and the stones of the field are at peace with us, when we are at peace with God. It is most sweet to feel that wherever you are everything is at peace with you; and then to look inside into this little world where there once raged such fierce battles, and there also to feel the sprinkled blood—this, this is joy! Conscience is quiet, fear has subsided, the deadly dread is gone, all is quiet, and all is well.

To feel that you have forgiven every enemy if you have any, that you do not bear a recollection of an injury, this also is a brave easement of the heart. As the tablets of the Romans when they had written upon the wax were afterwards rolled over with a hot iron to

produce a complete erasure, so by grace we are enabled to smooth out of the soul every angry line, and to begin life anew as to our fellow-men. Revenge and malice are unknown among true Christians. I have no more memory of ill towards any man that liveth than a babe unborn. This is a clear atmosphere to live in! How different from the thunder-charged air of envy, malice, and hate! "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Blessed are the men who live in this peace,—peace of God's giving; peace of the Holy Ghost's working; peace above and peace below, peace within and peace around: peace, peace, the blessed fruit of the lips.

IV. I close by using my text in a fourth way, practically, by saying that this should be THE MOTTO OF EVERY BELIEVER.

It has been his song for himself,—now let it be his motto in dealing with other people. This should be his spirit and desire *in the church*—"Peace, peace." I thank God that we have enjoyed peace as a church these many years, but I have known certain churches where peace would be a novelty, a novelty which I recommend them to try. Some little churches seem to think that they must have an angry discussion every month, or else they are living beneath their gospel privileges. This leads to heart-burnings, and promotes splits and divisions, and these are as frequent among them as fights at an Irish wake. They want a new minister every now and then, for they consider their want of prosperity to be the minister's fault: and then they want a fresh set of deacons, for the evil is thought to be the deacons' fault. By-and-by they discover that some leading man, or, what is worse, some leading woman, is at the bottom of the evil, and they must get rid of him or her, and then all will go right; and they practise the process of dismemberment, cutting off one part of the body, and then another, till they think the smaller they become the better they will be. What a mistake! Do they think to find peace by breaking into pieces? The more Christians are divided the more they can subdivide, and the smaller the sect the more prepared is it for another schism. Brethren, whenever you fall a-quarrelling I shall know that the Spirit of God has gone from you. Hitherto we have put up with one another very well, by God's grace, and I hope we shall continue to do so. I do not suppose you ever thought that I was perfect: if you did, you did not know much about me. I knew very well that you were not perfect. I never flattered you from the very beginning, and therefore I am not disappointed in you. We have gone on wonderfully well with each other, considering how imperfect we are; and I trust that the grace of God, which has kept so large a multitude together in love and peace, will continue to do it, to his own glory.

Now, especially when I am away, if any enemy brings strange fire to set the church alight with it, I pray you who are older and wiser than others to keep your buckets full of water, and stand ready to quench the first spark of ill feeling. You, good brothers and sisters, who are rather fond of talking, if you see a little blaze beginning, leave off your talking, for fear you should be adding fuel to the flame. Do not repeat what you have heard against a brother, but ring the curfew, and

cover the fire. Pull the logs all apart, and throw the holy water of love over the hot ashes. Do not let the fire of anger burn. Why should we? We have to live together in heaven for ever, we may as well enjoy happy fellowship here. May the Lord grant us to feel the force of those heavenly principles, which will enable us to live in peace and quiet for many and many a year to come! I would like every member of the church to go about saying within himself, "Peace, peace. I am a peace-maker in the church, and if I ever must be a peace-*breaker* it shall not be in the house of God, among the family of the Lord Jesus."

We should labour to carry out the same quiet spirit *in the family*. When you get home do not change "Peace, peace," into scolding and nagging. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." The apostle says, "If it be possible," because he knew that it would be a very difficult thing always to be peaceable with everybody, for some people are so unreasonable that they are never at peace till they are at war, and never quiet till they are making a disturbance. Be it ours under great provocation still to cry, "Peace, peace." Put up with a great deal: bear, and bear, and bear, and bear, and bear—I have not time to repeat the word—till seventy times seven. They will most surely conquer who can most completely submit, for in this world he that would be greatest must be least, and he that can stoop the lowest shall rise the highest. I do not think there is much in a heritage worth fighting for compared with brotherly unity. Family peace and love are worth more than a disputed will can ever yield. The game of quarrelling is not worth the candle. When I have had to compose family differences I have usually found that the misunderstanding began about nothing, and went on about nothing; and yet the mischief done is frequently terrible. When I have to make peace, I like to have some *real* injury, injustice, or wrong to deal with: something that I can handle, judge, and condemn; but an invisible, misty, indefinable suspicion is hard to overcome. When there is nothing in the squabble, peace-making is difficult work. There is a great tingle-tangle over nothing. You cannot get at it. It is a sort of stinging jelly-fish, which you feel but cannot grasp. Loving bonds are broken, and there is ill-blood between Christian men and Christian women who ought to love one another, and all about—about—nothing! Now, you Christian people, go about with this as your pass-word—"Peace, peace, peace, peace." This will quiet the worst termagant of a wife that ever wearied a man—peace, peace. This will sober the most outrageous husband that ever tried a woman—peace, peace. Cultivate peace in the home garden whatever you do elsewhere.

When peace reigns in your own family, go *into the world* with the same watchword—"Peace, peace." Do not set dogs by the ears, but tame lions and tigers. Compose differences, and make people friends. If certain persons were dropped into the garden of Eden, they would be the serpent in it; but there are others who, if you were to set them down in a village distracted with strife and contention, they would be lumps of love to sweeten every bitterness. Try and be just such. Members of the Tabernacle, especially, let your motto always be, "Peace, peace," amongst your neighbours, for the glory of God.

What a difference there will be when this is taken up among all Christian sects—when there shall be no more envying and strife between this denomination and that, but each one shall be saying in Christ's name, "We are brethren—peace, peace." How silly it is for one clique of good people to be setting up Mr. So-and-so as "the greatest preacher that ever lived." How idle for others to reply, "No, he is not. So-and-so preaches better." Let all this be silenced while we cry, "Peace, peace." None of us who are ministers preach as well as we ought to do, and none of you who are hearers live as you ought to live. When you hear anything like crying up of such poor mortals as we are, cry, "Peace, peace," to such nonsense! We are all servants of one Master; and may the Lord make us all better servants! Let peace ring the death-knell of petty jealousies, and may all the saints be visibly one in Christ Jesus!

May the day come when, all the world over, there shall be peace; peace to Afghan and to Zulu, as it is to-day to Prussian and to Frenchman and to Englishman. Let us wish "Peace, peace" to all of woman born. May this blessed word be rung out as a clarion note beneath these heavens till men shall recognise that they make one family, and God is the one great Father. Ye nations, learn war no more! "Peace, peace, peace." Catch the words, ye winds, and waft them—"Peace, peace, peace." Hear the words, ye stars, and shine them out to-night—"Peace, peace." Rise up, O sun, in the morning, and over all rejoicing lands pour forth, with thy light and warmth, peace and quietness! May peace be with you, my brethren, henceforth and for ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lvii. 15—21; lviii. 1—12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (Vers. II.), 704, 722.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"A worthy successor to 'John Ploughman's Talk,' and we should not wonder if it rivalled its vast circulation. The style is pithy, practical, and pungent, very much to the point, and abounding in sound common sense."—*Word and Work.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TOKENS FOR GOOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me."—Psalm lxxxvi. 17.

I WOULD have you note, beloved friends, at the outset, how this man of God, in the hour of conflict, *looks to his divine protector.* He does not run about to consult with friends, nor does he set himself down to digest his bitter sorrow in solitude, but he gets away to the Lord his God, who has covenanted to help him. That same God who in his brightest days was his exceeding joy, is in his darkest night his surest consolation. Hence he cries, "Lord, show me a token for good. Do *thou* show it. Let it come *from thee.* All other signs and tokens I can forego, but do thou show me a token for good, and my spirit will be revived at once." You see, he looks away from the secondary to the primary, from the temporal to the eternal, from that which he could see with his eyes, to him whom having not seen he trusted and rejoiced in. O mourner, learn wisdom from the father of the wisest of men! We need not hesitate to copy the pattern set by the man after God's own heart. O you who are surrounded by persecutors, will you not imitate David? You cannot do better in every adversity than to look unto the Lord, the ever-merciful. I know you have been casting about to the right and to the left to find anchor-hold, and still the vessel drifts. Now, throw the great bower anchor into the depths. Let it go right down deep out of sight, and let it get a grip upon eternal faithfulness, and your barque shall outride both wind and tide. Trust the quicksands of human confidence no longer. Look to the Lord alone. It is a severance from man, a complete deliverance from the arm of flesh, that God designs by our trouble, and the sooner we come to it the better for us: certainly we shall the more quickly obtain the benefit

designed by our trouble, and probably we shall the sooner come to the end of it.

"Trust with a faith untiring
In thine omniscient King,
And thou shalt see admiring
What he to light will bring:

"Of all thy griefs the reason
Shall at the last appear;
Though hidden for a season
'Twill shine in letters clear."

Observe that, in the case of David, *all his troubles drove him to his God.* I have noticed in the case of too many professors that they seem to have a fair-weather religion, a summer-season faith, which shrinks and loses its colour in a little rain or a sharp frost, or when the wind blows from the cold corner of affliction. I hear of some who, when they are very poor, do not come up to the house of God. They say they have not proper clothes to come in, as if the Lord had respect unto our garments, which are nothing better than the covering of our shame. This is an idle excuse, and yet I know that poverty does drive some professors away from the God whom they profess to worship: they murmur and become discouraged, and give all up in a pet, as if they only loved God for the sake of bread, as a hungry dog will follow a stranger who feeds him. There are others who say, "I cannot hold up my head among my brethren as I used to do, and so I stay away from the congregation:" as if God wanted you to hold your heads up—as if he did not look most to those who hold down both their heads and their hearts. What, will you turn away from the stream because you are thirsty? Will you leave the bread because you are hungry? Is not godliness meant to be a comfort to you in your time of trouble? Do not poor men need the gospel? Do *you* not require it all the more now that your comforts are so greatly diminished? Above all things, seek ye the Lord's face when trials surround you, or else, assuredly, you cannot be his own; for God's people, though they cry to him daily, are yet driven to him more and more in proportion as they are brought low, and thrown into distress. "They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." This is one of the sure marks of the children of God—they kiss the rod, and the more the Lord chastens them, the more they cling to him. When the Lord smites, the ungodly kick against him; they are like the bullock that will not plough by reason of stubbornness, and when it feels a goad it kicks, and will not go on, but is bent on having its own way. But when the Lord has trained his people, and accustomed them to the yoke, they are obedient to the goad as soon as they feel it, and yield to his will as soon as it is made known. Nay, more than that, I think the more God chastens his people, the more they love him. I am persuaded that the most whipped of the Lord's family are the best of his children. I do not say that any of you may wish for affliction; you will have enough of it without wishing for it; but I do avow my belief that the favourites of heaven are those who feel most of tribulation. The choicest plants in God's garden are those that are watered with affliction, and made wet with the night dews of grief. His rarest vines are

those which feel most of the knife, and are cut back almost down to the root. There is no fragrance so sweet as that which distils from a flower which the great husbandman has bruised; and when he seems even to have trodden upon it as though he despised it, he has been secretly blessing it, for the broken and the contrite heart he prizes above all things. Therefore, dear friends, let all your griefs send you in prayer to God, and you will then grow in blessing by every tribulation. When big waves of trouble come, pray that they may wash you on the Rock of Ages, and they will do you no harm. When you lose anything, try to make a gain of it by going to your God, that he may sanctify the loss. Whenever you are afflicted, instead of running away from him who smites you, run inwards to his bosom. If a man is very weak, and he is contending with a strong adversary, he will do well to get close to him. The farther off the heavier is the blow when a strong man deals it; but when the weak man closes in with him, how can the strong man smite him? What says God? "Let him lay hold on my strength, and I will make peace with him." Fly in spirit to your God. Fly to him even when he seems angry; run on the point of his sword, for he will not harm the soul that confides in him. It cannot be that humble trust should meet with a repulse. Jesus declares, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; and if you will but trust him, and, when he seems angry, will still fly to him, you shall find rest unto your souls. Ye children of God, mind this.

Once more, notice that *the psalmist while he thus looks to God, and is driven to him by his troubles, manifestly looks to God alone.* There is not in this psalm a word about friends, allies, or helpers. He has but one request, and this is, "Bow down *thine* ear, O Lord, hear me." His heart is evidently saying—

> "My spirit looks to God *alone;*
> My rock and refuge is his throne;
> In all my fears, in all my straits,
> My soul on his salvation waits."

God alone—Oh! that is a word to be learned, to be learned by experience, and most assuredly none will ever know it unless they are taught by the Holy Ghost. I do not think we often learn it till we hear it in the thunder of divine power, when the deep-throated tempest within the soul mutters—"God alone! God alone!" In fair weather we are for mixing our trust, but when the whirlwind is abroad none but God will serve our turn. O my brother man, if thou wilt set one foot upon the rock of divine faithfulness, and the other foot upon the sand of human confidence, thou wilt go down with a great fall. Both feet on the rock! Mind that. Your whole confidence must be fixed upon your Lord. Hang only upon that sure nail upon which hangs the whole universe, and hang nowhere else. What says David? "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Beware of setting up a rival in the temple of thy trust. Who is it that thou wouldst yoke with God? What helper is there that thou wouldst put side by side with him? If thou couldst depend upon an angel—does it not make thee smile at thy folly to think of saying, "I trust in God and an angel"? Why there is no pairing such disparities. The infinite

Creator of all is not to be yoked even with the most glorious of his creatures, and yet thou wouldst put thy fellow-man into the yoke with God, and trust in these two. Go, yoke an angel with an emmet if thou wilt, but never think of joining God with man, and making the two thy confidence, when God is all in all. Oh to be cut clear of all visible supports, and props, and holdfasts! You have seen a balloon well filled, struggling to rise: what kept it down? It longed to mount above the clouds into the calm serene, and yet it lingered. What hindered it? The ropes which bound it to earth. Cut clear the ropes, and then see how it mounts! With a spring it leaps upward while we are gazing into the open sky. O for such a clearance and such a mounting for our spirits! Alas, we are hindered and hampered! What are the bonds which detain us? Are they not our visible supports and reliances? O my soul, thy human confidences have been to thee like the iron chain which binds the captive eagle to the rock; but if that confidence of thine were gone—if that chain on which thou dost doat so much were broken, even though it were with a rough blacksmith's hammer—then thou couldst stretch thy wings, and be a child of the sun, and dwell aloft amid the eternal light. Oftentimes the thing which we most dread proves to be our grand necessity: by being deprived of earthly comforts we are cut clear of everything except our God. The Lord bring us into this state of high spiritual emancipation.

With this as a preface, I now come to notice the particular prayer which David in this state of mind puts up. It was necessary to give you this preface as a kind of guard against the very common tendency which exists among God's people to depend upon signs and tokens. Especially as we are going to preach a little upon this prayer for a "token" it was essential to begin aright, lest we should add to the too common craving for signs and wonders. We will dwell first upon *the request* for a token, and then, if we have time, we will touch upon *the result* which David says would come of having such a token—that those which hated him would see it and be ashamed, because God had helped him and comforted him.

I. David puts up A REQUEST FOR A TOKEN. It was a token from God, mark you, and it was a token entirely according to God's will. Never forget that it was a token asked in faith, and not in unbelief; for there is a great distinction here.

Dear brethren, we have no right to say, "My God, I will believe in thee if thou wilt give me a token, and, if not, I will remain in hesitating unbelief;" for the English of that is, "I will reckon thee to be false unless thou show me a sign according to my will." If God be true, thou art bound to believe him, whether he give thee a token or not; and thou art not permitted to suspend thy faith upon conditions of thine own inventing. Whether he will or will not give thee a token must be according to his own mind. He may give or withhold as he pleases; but thou art bound to believe him, since every man is bound to believe the truth. God has never been false to thee; thou hast therefore no cause to doubt him. If he give thee the light, be thankful; but as his child thou art bound to trust him in the dark. If he speaks to thee a favourable word, thou art to be glad; but thou art bound to trust him even if he speaks nothing but rough words to thee, for he is just as true.

His truth and thy belief in that truth must not be thought to depend upon signs and tokens: his word is very sure, and may not be questioned.

Moreover, we have known some who professed to be the children of God, who have picked out certain tokens according to their own whims and fancies and follies, and they have spoken as if God must do this or that at their dictation. I fear that in some this is a wicked presumption not to be tolerated for a moment. At best it is a childish folly, which men in Christ Jesus ought long ago to have outgrown. I do not doubt that the Lord has indulged some of his little children with marks and signs while they were very, very feeble, which he will never give them again, and which they ought never to seek for again—which, indeed, now that they have grown up to riper years and to more strength of grace, they ought themselves to put away as childish things. Not a few of these signs they may even suspect, saying, "Peradventure after all there was not so much in those marks and tokens as I thought there was. They helped me just then, but I could not rely upon them now; I prefer that which is better and surer." The Apostle Peter, after he has described Christ upon the mount as manifesting himself to his servants in the transfiguration, declares, "we have a more sure word of prophecy." What, more sure than the transfiguration? Yes, more sure even than the evidence of their eyes when they saw their Lord glorified upon the holy mount. If thou hast ever been upon the mount with Christ, and if thou hast seen all his brightness, yet still thou art not to compare even the sight of thy eyes, when they see the best and brightest that they can see, with the word of testimony which must be sure—a light that shineth in a dark place. All the rapt experiences which we have ever had are not to be trusted in comparison with the word of God. I say it advisedly, even the sweetest communion we have ever had with Christ may after all be suspected, and indeed it is upon such ripe fruit that Satan soon sets his hand that he may rob us of its savour if possible, for he is not slow to cast doubts upon the holiest joys of God's elect. There may come a time when we shall fear that we were carried away by excitement, or deluded by fanaticism; but he who speaks the word of Scripture cannot lie, and when his Spirit speaks that same truth into the soul we have therein a testimony which never can be doubted, but must be accepted over the head of everything. "Let God be true, and every man a liar"—ourselves and all; all liars as compared with the eternal verities of the revelation of God the Holy Ghost. The basis of faith is not our experience, but the testimony of God, and we must mind we do not make the feet of our image partly of God's gold and partly of our clay. Our experience may be in error, but the infallible word of God cannot be, and it is upon that alone which we must stand.

Yet we may ask for tokens in a subordinate sense. Trusting in the Lord, token or no token; believing his word, evidence or no evidence; we may then humbly ask confirmatory seals to our souls. Taking his promise as it stands, and believing it, though the heavens themselves should seem to rock and reel—we may then say, "Yet Lord, inasmuch as I am but dust and ashes, and therefore weak and trembling, show me a token for good."

We may feel quite safe in seeking tokens of the kind which are mentioned in this psalm. And first, we may beg for *answers to prayer*, because the psalm begins with, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me"; and farther on we read in the sixth verse, "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications." There is no fanaticism in expecting God to answer prayer, and there is no misuse of logic in drawing the inference that, if he does hear my prayer in the time of trouble, this is a token for good to my soul. Has my prayer been accepted before him? Have I received the gracious answer of peace? Then let me be comforted thereby. Especially was I in deep distress where no man could help me, and did I then cry to him, and did he come to my rescue? Assuredly, this is a seal that is set to my soul that I am no hypocrite. This is a token that I am no stranger to God, and that I am not cast away from his presence. Answered prayers are hopeful arguments of acceptance. David fitly said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me," and then he joyfully added, "But verily God hath heard me." Thus he proved the soundness of his heart before God. I ask you to look back and see whether you have indeed prevailed with God in secret prayer. Have you had your Jabboks and your Carmels? Do I not speak to many who are familiar with the great Hearer of prayer? Has he not often heard you? I am not too bold when I assert that the Lord has granted me according to the desire of my heart times without number. The devil himself can never dispute me out of facts—facts which shall for ever stand on my memory, "engraved as in eternal brass," for out of the depths I have cried unto God, and he has as distinctly answered my prayers as though he had rent the heavens and come down to succour his servant. With overwhelming delight he fills me, for he hath had respect unto my cry. His tenderness to me in this respect has made my life singularly happy, though I have had a large share of pain and depression. When I think over the seasons in which the Lord has specially answered me, I bid defiance to all the sceptics and scientists who haunt our footsteps. Brethren in Christ, you have, each of you, in your own way, according to your own need, had sure instances of the faithfulness of God to you, and these have been reviving tokens of love. At this present be of good cheer. Even if for a while the heavens should seem as brass, and prayer should not be heard, recollect that he did hear you in times gone by, and he is the same God, and changes not, and therefore is hearing still, and will answer by-and-by. Therefore cry mightily to him. It may be that your prayer is like a ship, which, when it goes on a very long voyage, does not come home laden so soon; but, when it does come home, it has a richer freight. Mere coasters will bring you coals, or such like ordinary things; but they that go afar to Tarshish return with gold and ivory. Coasting prayers such as we pray every day bring us many necessaries, but there are great prayers which like the old Spanish galleons cross the main ocean and are longer out of sight, but come home deep laden with a golden freight. When prayer has tarried, the Lord our God has made up for the delays, and showed us why he did delay—to give us a richer and a rarer blessing through our waiting, and also to prepare us to receive it. Go on in prayer if you have no immediate answer, and

e answers you have had in years gone by be tokens for good to oul at this time.

"God liveth still!
Trust my soul, and fear no ill:
God is good; from his compassion
Earthly help and comfort flow;
Strong is his right hand to fashion
All things well for men below;
Trial, oft the most distressing,
In the end has proved a blessing:
Wherefore then my soul despair?
God still lives, and heareth prayer."

ı meet with another class of tokens in the psalm, and these concern *ɜservation of character*. Kindly read the second verse: "Preserve ul, for I am holy." I know I am speaking in these dark and ed times to many of God's children who are tried in business, and exercised by the general depression: your great fear arises out of d of failure to discharge your debts. You have been praying to ɔrd about your business; and perhaps Satan has tempted you to a re of unbelief against which you are daily fighting. Now, has the helped you to do that which is honest and upright before men? e preserved your soul because you are consecrated to him? You ɔeen a loser, but in that loss can you say, "No fault attaches to t is the act of God. Things have not prospered with me, but I ɔeen diligent, and I have used my best discretion, and I have cur- every expense to save as much as possible. I have sought to eat rn bread, and not the bread of another man, and I would sooner to labour with my hands in the most menial service than that any l say of me that I have forgotten the way of uprightness and in- y"? If such be the case, you will feel acutely the difficulties of ɔathway, but you must not give way to despondency. Look up lay the man, and by no means give up. Fly to the Lord in this ıf need, and see what he will do. It is written, "Let integrity and ıtness preserve me," and if such has been your case it is a token ɔod. You have not lost much if your character remains un- hed. After all, "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of ıings which he possesseth"; and "a good name is better than ıus ointment." When God gives a man grace to rejoice in his lance, it is a great thing; but it is an equal favour when he gives ers of his people grace to rejoice that they are brought low. There ɜn more contentment in a narrower sphere than in a wider one, great deal less care and anxiety, and more fellowship with God in age than in a broad mansion. If God keeps your character spot- eckon that the smell of fire has not passed upon you. If the Lord ɜs you to do the right, let him do what he pleases with you. If n pay twenty shillings in the pound, and walk out of the house rom any charge of unjust dealing, we may feel that the worst ɔf all is over, for to an honest heart it is a crushing trial to be e to pay every man his own. May the Holy Spirit lead you in the ɔf uprightness, and you need not envy any among the sons of men. hird form of token for good is found in *deliverance from trouble.*

We have that in the second verse also: "O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee," and all through the psalm David is crying for deliverance from trouble. I am addressing many who have felt the strokes of tribulation. You have been brought very low; in your horror it seemed to you like the lowest hell; but you have been brought up from it, and you can at this hour sing of delivering grace. We are not all hanging our harps on the willows, some of us are praising God upon the high sounding cymbals because of his delivering mercy, for he has brought our soul out of prison, has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. When these things come, they are to be regarded as tokens for good, if they come as the result of prayer and faith. Our personal testimony should be like that of David in the thirty-fourth psalm: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." When our distresses are ended our songs should begin, even as the psalmist says of men rescued from peril: they pray, and then they praise. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" There ought to be praises where there have been deliverances. When we have gone to God in prayer with open mouth, and he has filled it, then should we go back again with the open mouth, to have it filled with his praises all the day long. Come, friends, look back upon the rescues and recoveries of the past, and rejoice in the Lord. One good old saint, when she heard one sing,

> "Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
> Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through,"

said, "Why, my road, when I look back upon it, is paved with Ebenezers. I cannot take a step but what I step upon a stone of help; and on both sides I see so many records of the Lord's goodness that the road seems walled up by them on both sides." Many of us can say the same. Well surely

> "His love in time past forbids us to think,
> He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink."

If he has delivered us from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear, shall we be afraid of that uncircumcised Philistine? No, but the giant boaster shall fall before us. In the name of the Lord will we destroy all future foes, because in his name aforetime we have destroyed the like. That is fine language which Paul uses in the epistle to the Corinthians: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

These three forms of tokens for good are very sure, and very sober, not at all like those which fanaticism seeks after, and yet they are most valuable. Answered prayers, preservations from sin, and deliverances from trouble are rich jewels from the Bridegroom's hand, marks of love most costly. Those who have them should not forget them. "Shall a

maid forget her ornaments?" Shall gifts of the Bridegroom be put away as though they were of no value? God forbid.

There is another form of token which must never be overlooked, and that is, *a sense of pardoned sin.* This comes in in the third and fifth verses. "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Even though we have been sustained in our integrity, we must, nevertheless, be conscious of many faults. You cannot go through either the joys of this world or the sorrows of it without incurring a measure of defilement. He who picks his steps the most successfully will yet gather soil upon his feet, and they will need washing by those dear hands which alone can take away the stain of sin. When that washing is given, it is a very choice love-token. If you feel that your conscience is purged from dead works—if you are walking in the light as God is in the light, and are enjoying fellowship with the Father, while the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth you from all sin, then rejoice in the token for good which is given you. If you know the power of that word, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"—if you are indeed "accepted in the Beloved," then know of a surety that one of the best tokens for good is in your possession. It may be that your purse is scant, but your sin is forgiven! It may be that disease is creeping over your flesh, but your sin is forgiven! What a bliss is yours, whatever your trial may be! Suppose yourself to be in danger of shipwreck: the ship is going down, the passengers are shrieking with terror, for there is nothing before them but the murderous waves. The boiling floods will soon conceal the last vestige of the ship: grim death opens his wide jaws! The last moment has come! But what do I see? What was that which rose upon the crest of the wave? It was the life-boat! Yes! Here comes the life-boat, and you are put on board it! What is your thought at the time? What must be your thought? What! Did you whine out, "I have lost my best portmanteau, which I left in my cabin"? What a fool you would be if you talked like that! The boatmen would be ready to throw you into the sea. No, your gratitude forgets all minor things, and rejoices in the grand deliverance. You cry, "My life is saved! My life is saved! Blessed be the Lord for saving me! My money, my very clothes—for I started up in my sleep, and leaped into the life-boat—I have lost them all, but I am alive, and that is enough. Thank God, I shall see my native land again!" Shall a man who is delivered from hell, and whose sins are forgiven, go whining all the day long because he has lost his money, or some other trifle, for trifle it is as compared with his soul. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life"; and if our life be saved in Christ Jesus, through the forgiveness of our sin by his most precious blood, how can we fret? Why, man, God has given you a mercy that may swallow up your troubles as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the serpents. "Strike me, my God," said one of old, "Strike me as thou wilt, now that thou hast forgiven me." The pardon of sin is such a token for good that all ills disappear before it.

There is another token for good mentioned in the psalm which you may well pray for. You will find it in the fourth verse: "Rejoice the

soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." This is *support under trial.*

It is a very blessed token for good when you are able to keep calm, quiet, and happy in the midst of losses, crosses, bereavements, and afflictions. All the water in the sea will never hurt the ship so long as it is outside, it is only that which enters the vessel that can sink it. Hence the Saviour says, "Let not your *heart* be troubled; ye believe in God; believe also in me." In the world ye shall have tribulation, but let not your *heart* be troubled. Now, are you, dear friend, conscious at this time while everything is going against you that you never were happier than you are now? Can you give all up? Can you be resigned to your heavenly Father's will? Does a sweet patience steal over you? Do you sometimes say to yourself and to your friends, "I would not have believed that I could have passed through this as I am doing"? Well, that is a token for good, and you may take comfort from it. What does it matter to a man after all whether God increases the load and increases the strength, or whether he decreases the load and decreases the strength? If a man has to carry a pound weight, and he is so weak that he can only manage to carry eight ounces, well, he is an overloaded man; but if a man had to carry a ton, and God gave him strength enough to carry two, why, he would be a lightly-loaded man, would he not? It is not the weight of the burden, it is the proportion of the burden to the strength. Now, the proportion of the burden to the strength was settled long ago—thousands of years ago. It is written, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be"; and there was one who proved it eighteen hundred years ago, and exclaimed, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." You see the scale; if there is an ounce of suffering, there is an ounce of consolation. Almighty wisdom keeps the measure exact. Let the tribulation abound. Put it into the left-hand scale. Heap it up. Put in more and more trial. What a weight it is! Yes, but there you see in the right-hand scale the balancing consolation; and I think if we were wise we should be willing to accept—nay, we should even rejoice in—the abounding tribulations because of the abounding consolations. We shall always be little, I am afraid, while our trials are little; but it is when we get into the deeper waters that the Lord helps us to swim, and he makes men of us then, and we begin to glory in tribulation also, because the power of God doth rest upon us. Oh may the Lord give us faith to come up to this point, and this shall be for ever a blessed token for good when we can say,

"I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul;
I hear the storms in vales beneath;
I hear the thunders roll:

"But I am calm with thee, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies;
And to the heights on which I stand,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise."

May God endow us with that token for good; for serenity in suffering,

patience in tribulation, joy in the very prospect of death, these are all as white stones, which are the secret signs of divine favour.

Cheering visits from Christ, and fresh anointings of the Holy Spirit, are also most sure tokens for good, and if not mentioned expressly in the psalm, must not be omitted in our sermon. They are, however, here in such phrases as these:—"Rejoice the soul of thy servant," in verse 4; "unite my heart to fear thy name," in verse 11; "O turn unto me and have mercy upon me," in verse 16; and in the latter clause of our text, "thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me." The Lord graciously visits his people, the clouds break, the night declines, and the day begins to dawn. Precious promises are applied to the heart with reviving power, hope is strengthened, and joy is renewed. Sweet communion is enjoyed under affliction, and Christ is seen sitting as a refiner at the mouth of the furnace. Sin is no longer allowed to burden the heart; yea, the very memory of it, so far as it would cause pain to the mind, is utterly removed, and the glad spirit rejoices in the consciousness of full acceptance with God. Ordinances and the word become sweeter than honey or the honeycomb, and the man feasts in the house of the Lord as one who is an honoured guest at a royal banquet, where the banner of Jesus' love waves over his head, and he himself leans his head on his Lord's bosom. This is a token for good, the memory of which shall cheer him for many a long day, and being treasured up like some sweet smelling herb, shall serve to render fragrant his sick chamber or his prison-house. O the joy of saints when the Bridegroom is with them; they cannot fast or be of a sad countenance, for their assurance of his divine love drives every care and fear away.

"Tis like the singing of the birds
When winter's frost is fled;
And like the warmth the sun affords
To creatures almost dead.

"'Tis like the comfort of a calm
Which stills a stormy sea;
And like the tender, healing balm
To such as wounded be."

Of such tokens for good may we enjoy rich store, until the day break, and the shadows flee away.

II. I had many things to say unto you, but I remember Paul's mistake that he made when he preached until midnight, and Eutychus fell from the third loft, for he had gone to sleep; and as I could not possibly raise a sleeper from the dead, as Paul did, I will not try the experiment of preaching as long as Paul did. I cannot say anything as to THE RESULT OF SUCH TOKENS. The influence of these tokens upon our foes must be undescribed save that many a time the favour of God to his people has been so conspicuous that their most malicious adversaries have stood in awe of them. Their answered prayers have been like armour to them, their patience has lit up their faces with an awe-inspiring splendour, and their integrity has been a wall of fire round about them. Even the devil has stood abashed in the presence of the favoured ones when God has dressed them in their marriage robes. He has known that they were of that chosen race against which he never

can prevail. As for other enemies—"when a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Like Pilate's wife, even worldly people have pleaded that good men should be let alone; the Lord has made them dream of the glory of their virtue, and they have been afraid. There is a dignity which doth hedge about those who are kings unto God. They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid because of the tokens for good which God sets on his saints.

Here we leave these words, only adding this, *what an unhappy state must those be in who have troubles, but have no God to go to;* enemies, but no heavenly defender; darkness, and no star of hope!

How poor must you be who cannot escape affliction, and yet have no helper in affliction! You run to your friends, do you? Ah well, they are a poor refuge to fly to, for mostly they are our friends when we can help them, but when we need anything from them, they do not know us. You trust *yourself,* do you? Ah well, I thought little of your friends, but I think less of you, for you are dust and ashes, and nothing else, and if your trust be in yourself it is a dream. And so you are a self-made man! your own creator? You need not be so very proud of your work. As you made yourself, and keep yourself going, you will come to a frightful end one of these days, when the inward force decays into weakness, and all the springs of nature fail. Whatever you make your god is like yourself, and both you and it must pass away ere long. Your hope shall be as a spider's web, and your expectation shall melt like the hoar frost when the sun arises. The Lord is coming, the Lord is coming, and woe unto hypocrites in that day! It will go ill with self-confident men in that day. But as for such as trust the Lord, do you know what they say? and they speak as inspiration bids them speak—"I shall be satisfied." I am not yet; but I *shall be* satisfied. And when shall I be satisfied? "When I awake with thy likeness." When the archangel's trumpet sounds, and wakes me into immortal perfection, then shall I be satisfied. Oh seek the Saviour's face. Dear hearts, that never have sought him yet, seek him now; for there is no satisfaction to be had apart from him. Get away to him; get away to him to-night. Cry unto him, for he will hear you. Come unto him, for he will receive you. May his divine Spirit lead you to cast yourselves on him, for he will in no wise cast you out. The Lord bless you, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—73 (Part II.), 691, 119 (Song V.)

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PLAIN MAN'S PATHWAY TO PEACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."—Matthew ix. 27—30.

I AM not about to expound this incident, nor to draw illustrations from it, but only to direct your attention to one single point in it, and that is, its extreme simplicity. There are other cases of blind men, and we have various incidents connected with them, such as in one instance the making of clay, and the sending of the patient to wash at the pool of Siloam, and so forth. But here the cure is extremely simple: the men are blind, they cry to Jesus, they come near, they confess their faith, and they receive their sight straightway. In many other cases of miracles that were wrought by Christ there were circumstances of difficulty; in one case a man is let down through the tiling, being borne of four; in a second case a woman comes behind him in the press, and touches the hem of his garment with great effort; we read of another who had been dead four days already, and there seemed to be a clear impossibility in the way of his ever coming forth from the tomb; but everything is plain sailing here. Here are blind men, conscious of their blindness, confident that Christ can give them sight, they cry to him, they come to him, they believe that he is able to open their eyes, and they receive their sight at once.

You see there was, in their case, these simple elements,—a sense of blindness, a desire for sight; then prayer, then coming to Christ, then an open avowal of faith, and then the cure. The whole matter lies in a nutshell. There are no details, no points of care and nicety which might suggest anxiety: the whole business is simplicity itself, and upon that one point I want to dwell at this time.

There are cases of conversion which are just as simple as this case of the opening of the eyes of the blind; and we are not to doubt the reality of the work of grace in them because of the remarkable absence of

singular incidents and striking details. We are not to suppose that a conversion is a less genuine work of the Holy Ghost because it is extremely simple. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

I. To make our discourse useful to many I will begin by remarking, in the first place, that it is an undoubted fact that MANY PERSONS ARE MUCH TROUBLED IN COMING TO CHRIST.

It is a fact which must be admitted, that all do not come quite so readily as these blind men came. There are instances on record in biographies—there are many known to us, and perhaps our own cases are among them—in which coming to Christ was a matter of struggle, of effort, of disappointment, of long waiting, and at last of a kind of desperation by which we were forced to come. You must have read Mr. John Bunyan's description of how the pilgrims came to the wicket gate. They were pointed, you remember, by Evangelist to a light and to a gate, and they went that way according to his bidding. I have told you sometimes the story of a young man in Edinburgh who was very anxious to speak to others about their souls; so he addressed himself one morning to an old Musselburgh fishwife, and he began by saying to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Ay," said she. He asked her, "Did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Yes," she said, resting a bit, "I felt the spiritual burden years ago, before you were born, and I got rid of it, too; but I did not go the same way to work that Bunyan's pilgrim did." Our young friend was greatly surprised to hear her say that, and thought she must be under grievous error, and therefore begged her to explain. "No," said she, "when I was under concern of soul, I heard a true gospel minister, who bade me look to the cross of Christ, and there I lost my load of sin. I did not hear one of those milk-and-water preachers like Bunyan's Evangelist." "How," said our young friend, "do you make that out?" "Why, that Evangelist, when he met the man with the burden on his back, said to him, 'Do you see that wicket gate?' 'No,' said he, 'I don't.' 'Do you see that light?' 'I think I do.' Why, man," said she, "he should not have spoken about wicket gates or lights, but he should have said, 'Do you see Jesus Christ hanging on the cross? Look to him, and your burden will fall off your shoulder.' He sent that man round the wrong way when he sent him to the wicket gate, and much good he got by it, for he was likely to have been choked in the slough of despond before long. I tell you, I looked at once to the cross, and away went my burden." "What," said this young man, "did you never go through the slough of despond?" "Ah," said she, "many a time, more than I care to tell. But at the first I heard the preacher say, 'Look to Christ,' and I looked to him. I have been through the slough of despond since that; but let me tell you, sir, it is much easier to go through that slough with your burden off than it is with your burden on." And so it is. Blessed are they whose eyes are only and altogether on the Crucified. The older I grow the more sure I am of this, that we must have done with self in all forms and see Jesus only if we would be at peace. Was John Bunyan wrong? Certainly not; he was describing things as they generally are. Was the old woman wrong? No, she was perfectly right: she was describing things as they ought to be, and as I wish they always were. Still, experience is

not always as it ought to be, and much of the experience of Christians is not Christian experience. It is a fact which I lament, but, nevertheless, must admit, that a large number of persons, ere they come to the cross and lose their burden, go round about no end of a way, trying this plan and that plan, with but very slender success after all, instead of coming straightway to Christ just as they are, looking to him and finding light and life at once. How is it, then, that some are so long in getting to Christ?

I answer, first, in some cases it is *ignorance*. Perhaps there is no subject upon which men are so ignorant as the gospel. Is it not preached in hundreds of places? Yes, thank God, it is, and illustrated in no end of books; but still men come not at it so; neither hearing nor reading can of themselves discover the gospel. It needs the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or else men still remain in ignorance as to this simplicity—this simplicity of salvation by faith. Men are in the dark, and do not know the way; and so they run hither and thither, and oftentimes go round about to find a Saviour who is ready there and then to bless them. They cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" when, if they did but understand the truth, his salvation is nigh them, "in their mouth and in their heart." If with their heart they will believe on the Lord Jesus, and with their mouth make confession of him, they shall be saved there and then.

In many cases, too, men are hindered by *prejudice*. People are brought up to the belief that salvation must be through ceremonies; and if they get driven out of that they still conclude that it must certainly be in some measure by their works. Numbers of people have learned a sort of half-and-half gospel, part law and part grace, and they are in a thick fog about salvation. They know that redemption has something to do with Christ, but it is much of a mixture with them; they do not quite see that it is all Christ or no Christ. They have a notion that we are saved by grace, but they do not yet see that salvation must be of grace from top to bottom; they fail to see that in order that salvation may be of grace it must be received by faith and not through the works of the law, nor by priestcraft, nor by any rites and ceremonies whatsoever. Being brought up to believe that surely there is something for them to do, it is long before they can get into the clear, blessed sunlight of the word, where the child of God sees Christ and finds liberty. "Believe and live" is a foreign language to a soul which is persuaded that its own works are in a measure to win eternal life.

With many, indeed, the hindrance lies in downright *bad teaching*. The teaching that is too common nowadays is very dangerous. The service makes no distinction between saint and sinner. Certain prayers are used every day which are meant for saints and sinners too—ready-made clothes, made to fit everybody, and fitting nobody at all. These prayers suit neither saint nor sinner, thoroughly beautiful as they are and grand as they are; but they bring up people under the notion and delusion that they are somewhere in a condition between being saved and being lost,—not actually lost, certainly, but yet not quite saints—they are betweenites, mongrels—a sort of Samaritans that fear the Lord and serve other gods, and who hope to be saved by an amalgam of grace

and works. It is hard to bring men to grace alone and faith alone: they will stand with one foot on the sea, and the other foot on the land. Much of teaching goes to buoy them up in the notion that there is something in man and something to be done by him, and hence they do not learn in their own souls that they must be saved by Christ, and not by themselves.

Besides that, there is *the natural pride of the human heart.* We do not like to be saved by charity, we must have a finger in it. We get pushed into a corner; farther and farther are we driven away from self-confidence, but we hang on by our teeth, if we cannot find a hold by any other means. With awful desperation we trust in ourselves. We will cling by our eyelashes to the semblance of self-confidence: we will not give up carnal confidence if it be possible to hold it. Then comes in, with our pride, *opposition to God;* for the human heart does not love God, and it frequently shows its opposition by opposing him about the plan of salvation. The enmity of the unrenewed heart is not displayed by actual open sin in all cases, for many by their very bringings-up have been made to be moral, but they hate God's plan of grace, and grace alone, and here their gall and bitterness begin to work. How they will writhe in their seats if the minister preaches divine sovereignty; they hate the text "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." They talk of the rights of fallen men, and of all being treated alike; and when it comes to sovereignty, and God's manifesting his grace according to his own absolute will, they cannot endure it. If they tolerate God at all it shall not be on the throne; if they acknowledge his existence, yet not as King of kings and Lord of lords who does as he wills, and has a right to pardon whom he reserves, and to leave the guilty, if so it pleases him, to perish in their guiltiness, rejecting the Saviour. Ah, the heart loves not God as God, as revealed in Scripture, but makes a god unto itself, and cries, "These be thy gods, O Israel."

In some instances the struggle of the heart in getting to Christ, I have no doubt, arises from *a singularity of mental conformation*, and such cases ought to be looked upon as exceptions, and by no means regarded as rules. Now take, for instance, the case of John Bunyan, to which we have referred. If you read "Grace Abounding," you will find that, for five years or more, he was the subject of the most fearful despair,—tempted by Satan, tempted by his own self, always raising difficulties against himself; and it was long, long, long before he could come to the cross and find peace. But then, dear friend, it is to the last degree improbable that either you or I will ever turn out John Bunyans. We may become tinkers, but we shall never write a Pilgrim's Progress. We might imitate him in his poverty, but we are not likely to emulate him in his genius: a man with such an imagination, full of wondrous dreams, is not born every day, and when he does come, his inheritance of brain is not all a gain in the direction of a restful life. When Bunyan's imagination had been purified and sanctified, its masterly productions were seen in his marvellous allegories; but while, as yet, he had not been renewed and reconciled to God, with such a mind, so strangely formed, so devoid of all education, and brought up as he had been in the roughest society, he was dowered with a fearful

heritage. That marvellous fancy would have wrought him wondrous woe if it had not been controlled by the divine Spirit. Do you wonder that, in coming to the day, those eyes which had been veiled in such dense darkness could scarcely bear the light, and that the man should think the darkness all the darker when the light began to shine upon him? Bunyan was one by himself; not the rule, but the exception. Now, you, dear friend, may be an odd person. Very likely you are; and I can sympathize with you, for I am odd enough myself; but do not lay down a law that everybody else must be odd too. If you and I did happen to go round by the back ways, do not let us think that everybody ought to follow our bad example. Let us be very thankful that some people's minds are less twisted and gnarled than ours, and do not let us set up our experience as a standard for other people. No doubt difficulties may arise from an extraordinary quality of mind with which God may have gifted some, or a depression of spirit natural to others, and these may make them peculiar as long as they live.

Besides, there are some who are kept from coming to Christ through remarkable *assaults of Satan.* You remember the story of the child whom his father would bring to Jesus, but "as he was a coming the devil threw him down and tare him." The evil spirit knew that his time was short, and he must soon be expelled from his victim, and therefore he cast him on the ground, and made him wallow in epilepsy, and left him half dead. So does Satan with many men. He sets upon them with all the brutality of his fiendish nature, and expends his malice upon them, because he fears that they are about to escape from his service, and he will no longer be able to tyrannise over them. As Watts says—

> "He worries whom he can't devour,
> With a malicious joy."

Now, if some come to Christ, and the devil is not permitted to assail them, if some come to Christ, and there is nothing strange about their experience, if some come to Christ, and pride and opposition have been conquered in their nature, if some come to Christ, and they are not ignorant, but well instructed, and readily see the light, let us rejoice that it is so. It is of such that I am now about to speak somewhat more at length.

II. It is admitted as an undoubted fact that many are much troubled in coming to Christ; but now, secondly, THIS IS NOT AT ALL ESSENTIAL TO A REAL, SAVING COMING TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. I mention this because I have known Christian men distressed in heart because they fear that they came to Christ too easily. They have half imagined, as they looked back, that they could not have been converted at all, because their conversion was not attended with such agony and torment of mind as others speak of.

I would first remark, that *it is very hard to see how despairing feelings can be essential to salvation.* Look for a minute. Can it be possible that unbelief can help a soul to faith? Is it not certain that the anguish which many experience before they come to Christ arises from the fact of their unbelief? They do not trust,—they say they cannot trust; and so they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Their

mind is tossed to and fro, and vexed sorely through unbelief; is this a foundation for holy trust? It would seem to me the oddest thing in all the world that unbelief should be a preparation for faith. How can it be that to sow the ground with thistle-seed should make it more ready for the good corn? Are fire and sword helpers to national prosperity? Is deadly poison an assistance to health? I do not understand it. It seems to me to be far better for the soul to believe the word of God at once, and far more likely to be a genuine work when the soul convinced of sin accepts the Saviour. Here is God's way of salvation, and he demands that I do trust his dear Son, who died for sinners. I perceive that Christ is worthy to be trusted, for he is the Son of God, so that his sacrifice must be able to put away my sin; I perceive also that he laid down his life in the room, place, and stead of his people, and therefore I heartily trust him. God bids me trust him, and I do trust him without any further question. If Jesus Christ satisfies God, he certainly satisfies me; and, asking no further question, I come and trust myself with him. Does not this kind of action appear to have about it all that can be needful? Can it possibly be that a raging, raving despair can ever be helpful towards saving faith? I do not see it. I cannot think it. Some have been beaten about with most awful thoughts. They have supposed that God could not possibly forgive them; they have imagined that, even if he could pardon them he would not, since they were not his elect, nor his redeemed. Though they have seen the gospel invitation written in letters of love: "Come *unto me* all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," they dare to question whether they should find rest if they did come, and they invent suspicions and surmises, some of them amounting even to blasphemy against the character of God and the person of his Christ. That such people have been forgiven according to the riches of divine grace I do verily believe, but that their sinful thoughts ever helped them to obtain pardon I cannot imagine. That my own dark thoughts of God, which left many a scar upon my spirit, were washed away with all my other sins, I know: that there was ever any good in those things, or that I can look back upon them without shame and regret, is a thing I do not know. I cannot see of what particular service they could have been to anybody. Shall one bath of ink take out the stain of another? Can our sin be removed by our sinning more? It is impossible that sin could aid grace, and that the greatest of all sins, the sin of unbelief, should help towards faith.

Yet, once again, dear friends, *much of all this struggling and tumult within, which some have experienced, is the work of the devil,* as I have already said. Can it be essential to salvation for a man to be under the influence of Satan? Is it needful that the devil should come in to help Christ? Is it absolutely essential for the black fingers of the devil to be seen at work with the lily hands of the Redeemer? Impossible. That is not my judgment of the work of Satan; nor will it, I think, be yours if you will look at it. If you never were driven either to blasphemy or despair by Satan, thank God you never were. You would have gained nothing by it; you would have been a serious loser. Let no man imagine that if he had been the prey of tormenting suggestions his conversion would have more marks of truth about it: no mistake

ıore groundless. It cannot be that the devil can be of any
› anyone among you. He must do you damage, and nothing
age. Every blow he strikes hurts but does not heal. Mr.
himself says, when he speaks of Christian fighting with
, that, though he won the victory, he was no gainer by it. A
l better go many miles round about, over hedge and ditch,
ıan once come into conflict with Apollyon. All that is essen-
onversion is found in the simpler way of coming at once to
ıd as to all else we must face it if it comes, but certainly not
it. It is easy to see how Satanic temptation hampers, and how
men in bondage when otherwise they might be at liberty, but
›d it can do in itself it would be hard to tell.

agaın, *many instances prove that all this law work, and doubt-fearing, and despairing, and being tormented of Satan, are not because there are scores and hundreds of Christians who came › Christ, as these two blind men did, and to this very day know : about those things.* I could, if it were proper, call upon brethren around me at this moment who would tell you that, when I :n preaching the experience of those who come to Christ with , they have been glad that it should be preached, but they have e know nothing of all this in our own experience." Taught ir very youth the way of God, trained by godly parents, they der the influences of the Holy Spirit very early in life, they ıt Jesus Christ could save them, they knew that they wanted ınd they just went to him, I was about to say, almost as as they went to their mother or their father when they were : they trusted the Saviour, and they found peace at once. ›f the honoured leaders of this church came to the Lord in this ıanner. Only yesterday I was greatly pleased with several w who confessed faith in Jesus in a way which charmed me, about their Christian experience there was little trace of ›urns and scars. They heard the gospel, they saw the suitability their case, and they accepted it there and then, and entered :ely into peace and joy. Now, we do not tell you that there such plain cases, but we assert boldly that we know hosts of ınces, and that there are thousands of God's most honoured who are walking before him in holiness, and are eminently ıose experience is as simple as A B C. Their whole story might ed up in the verse,—

> "I came to Jesus, as I was,
> Weary and worn and sad;
> I found in him a resting-place,
> And he has made me glad."

go yet further and assure you that many of those who give the ence that they are renewed by grace cannot tell you the day in ıey were saved, and cannot attribute their conversion to any ›n or to any one text of Scripture, or to any one event in life. not doubt their conversion for their lives prove its truth. You many trees in your garden of which you must admit that you ›w when they were planted; but, if you get plenty of fruit

and without price." Freely take what God freely gives, and simply trust the Saviour. Is not that the gospel? Well, then, why should any of you say, "I cannot trust Christ, because I don't feel this, and don't feel that"? Do I not assure you solemnly that I have known of many who have come to Christ just as they were—who have never undergone those horrible feelings which are so much spoken of, and yet have been most truly saved? Come as you are. Do not try to make a righteousness out of your unrighteousness, or a confidence out of your unbelief, or a Christ out of your blasphemies, as some seem to do; nor dote so foolishly as to imagine that despair may be a ground of hope. It cannot be. You are to get out of self, and into Christ, and there you will be safe. As the blind man said, when Christ asked him, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" so are you to say unto him, "Yea, Lord." Trust yourself with your Saviour, and he is your Saviour.

III. I conclude with one more observation, that THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE PRIVILEGED TO COME TO JESUS CHRIST SOFTLY, PLEASANTLY, AND HAPPILY, ARE NOT LOSERS. They do lose something, certainly; but there is not much in it. They lose somewhat of the picturesque, and they have the less to tell. When a man has had a long series of trials to drive him out of himself, and at last he comes to Christ, like a wrecked vessel tugged into port, he has a deal to talk of and write about, and perhaps he thinks it interesting to be able to tell it; and, if he can tell it to God's glory, it is quite proper that he should. Many of these stories are found in biographies, because they are the incidents which excite interest and make a life worth writing; but you must not conclude that all godly lives are of the same sort. Happy are those whose lives could not be written because they were so happy as to be uneventful. Some of the most favoured lives do not get written because there is nothing very picturesque about them. But I ask you this, when those blind men came to Christ just as they were, and said that they believed that he could open their eyes, and he did open their eyes, is there not as much *of Christ* in their story as there well could be? The men themselves are nowhere, but the healing Master is in the foreground. More detail might almost take away the peculiar prominence that he has in it all. There he stands, the blessed, glorious opener of the eyes of the two blind men; there he stands alone, and his name is glorious! There was a woman who had spent all her substance upon physicians, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. She had a long tale to tell of the various doctors she had been to; but I do not know that the narrative of her many disappointments would glorify the Lord Jesus one bit more than when these two blind men could say, "We heard of him, and we went to him, and he opened our eyes. We never spent a halfpenny upon doctors. We went straight away to Jesus, just as we were, and all he said to us was, 'Do you think that I can do it?' and we said, 'Yes, we believe you can,' and he opened our eyes directly; and it was all done." Oh, if my experience should ever stand in my Master's light, perish my best experience! Let Christ be first, last, midst; do you not say so, my brethren? If you, poor sinner, come to Christ at once, with nothing about you whatever that you ever can

talk of,—if you are just a nobody coming to the ever-blessed Everybody —if you are a mere nothing coming to him who is the All-in-all; if you are a lump of sin and misery, a great vacuum, nothing but an emptiness that never need be thought of any more, if you will come and lose yourselves in his infinitely glorious grace—this will be all that is wanted. It seems to me that you will lose nothing by the fact that there is not so much of the picturesque and the sensational in your experience. There will be, at least, this grand sensation—lost in self but saved in Jesus, glory be to his name.

Perhaps you may suppose that persons who come thus gently lose something by way of evidence afterwards. "Ah," said one to me, "I could almost wish sometimes that I had been an open offender, that I might see the change in my character; but, having been always moral from my youth up, I am not always able to see any distinct mark of a change." Ah, let me tell you, friends, that this form of evidence is of small use in times of darkness, for if the devil cannot say to a man, "You have not changed your life"—for there are some that he would not have the impudence to say that to, since the change is too manifest for him to deny it—he says, "You changed your actions, but your heart is still the same. You turned from a bold, honest sinner to be a hypocritical, canting professor. That is all you have done; you have given up open sin because your strong passions declined, or you thought you would like another way of sinning; and now you are only making a false profession, and living far from what you should do." Very little consolation is to be got even out of the change that conversion works when once the arch-enemy becomes our accuser. In fact, it comes to this: however you come to Christ you can never place any confidence in how you came. Your confidence must always rest in him you came to—that is, in Christ—whether you come to him flying, or running, or walking. If you get to Jesus you are all right, anyhow: but it is not how you come, it is whether you come *to him*. Have you come to Jesus? Do you come to Jesus? If you have come, and you doubt whether you have come, come over again. Never quarrel with Satan about whether you are a Christian. If he says you are a sinner reply to him, "So I am, but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I will begin again." He is an old lawyer, you know, and very cunning, and he knows how to baffle us, for we do not understand things so well as he does. He has been these thousands of years at the trade of trying to make Christians doubt their interest in Christ, and he understands it well. Never answer him. Refer him to your solicitor; tell him you have an Advocate on high who will answer him. Tell him you will fly away to Christ again; if you never went to Jesus before you will go now, and if you have been before you will go again. That is the way to end the quarrel. As to evidences, they are fine things in fine weather, but when the tempest is out wise men let evidences go. The best evidence a man can have that he is saved is that he is still clinging to Christ.

Lastly, some may suppose that those who come gently to Christ may lose a good deal of adaptation for after usefulness, because they will not be able to sympathize with those who are in deep perplexity, and in awful straits when they are coming to Christ. Ah, well, there are enough of us

who *can* sympathize with such; and I do not know that everybody is bound to sympathize with everybody in every respect. I remember mentioning one day to a man who had considerable property that his poor minister had a large family and could scarcely keep a coat on his back. I said I wondered how some Christian men who profited under the ministry of such a man did not supply his wants; he answered that he thought it was a good thing for ministers to be poor, because they could sympathize with the poor. I said "Yes, yes, but then, don't you see, there ought to be one or two that are not poor to sympathize with those who are rich." I would give them turn about, certainly, and let the poor pastor now and then have the power to sympathize with both classes. He did not seem to see my argument, but I think there is a good deal in it. It is a great mercy to have some brethren around us who, by their painful experience, can sympathize with those who have been through that pain; but do you not think it is a great mercy to have others who, through not having undergone that experience, can sympathize with others who have not undergone it? Is it not useful to have some who can say, "Well, dear heart, don't be troubled because the great dog of hell did not howl at you. If you have entered the gate calmly and quietly, and Christ has received you, do not be troubled because you are not barked at by the devil, for I, too, came to Jesus just as gently and safely and sweetly as you have done"? Such a testimony will comfort the poor soul; and so, if you lose the power to sympathize one way, you will gain the power to sympathize in another; and there will be no great loss after all.

To sum up all in one, I would that every man and woman and child here would come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems to me to be such a matchless plan of salvation, for Christ to take human sin and to suffer in the sinner's stead, and for us to have nothing to do but just to accept what Christ has done, and to trust ourselves wholly with him. He that would not be saved by such a plan as this deserves to perish; and so he must. Was there ever so sweet, so sure, and so plain a gospel? It is a joy to preach it. Will you have it? Dear souls, will you not yield to be nothing and have Jesus to be all in all?

God grant that none of us may reject this way of grace, this open way, this safe way. Come, linger no longer. The Spirit and the bride say "Come." Lord, draw them by the love of Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John iii. 14—36.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—232, 556, 549.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ASLEEP AND YET AWAKE.—A RIDDLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."—Solomon's Song v. 2.

WE are glad to perceive in this Song the varied experience of the bride. She was the well-beloved of the heavenly Bridegroom, but she was not without her faults. Though the "fairest among women," she was human, and, therefore, she had not reached angelical perfection. She was not perfect, to begin with, for at the outset she confessed, "I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." She was not perfect even in the exhibition of her love to him who had chosen her, for she has to acknowledge, as upon the occasion before us, that she treated him in an unworthy manner. She kept him waiting at her door in the chilly night, and grieved him so that he withdrew. She was not perfect even to the end of the chapter, for she could not hear her Lord's voice so clearly as certain of her companions, and she cried in the last chapter of her song, "Cause me to hear it."

Brethren, we shall not be able to claim entire perfection so long as we are this side the hills of division. Till the day break and the shadows flee away our Lord will have to sanctify and cleanse his spouse "with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." We are glad, I say, to have the experience of the spouse—that is, of the church as a whole, because we know that as is the church such are the members, and the rule that holds good for the whole will be found in its measure and proportion to be fulfilled in all its parts. We, too, have to say, "I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me;" and at times we have to ask, "Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" We have had mournfully to cry, "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer;" while the watchmen have justly smitten us and wounded us for our neglect of our Lord. Let us bless God that in the book of revealed truth he has not merely given us the ideal standard after which we are to seek, but he has also preserved for us the humbler patterns of those who have striven

to reach to the utmost height, and who have climbed a good way towards it, but who, nevertheless, have proved that, though they were the best of men, they were men at the best. Thus our Lord has saved us from despair by making us to know that we may be sincere, and true, and accepted, though we, too, fall short as yet of the holiness which we pant after with our whole hearts.

Nor are we alone favoured with the poetic story of the bride; we have also in the word of God the biographies of the saints, the memoirs of the godly, and these are exceedingly useful to us. I fear we should not, brethren, at certain times, know whether we were God's people at all if we were not able to compare ourselves with others of the family. We may lose our way sometimes as poor sheep have often done, and then though the greatest comfort is derived from seeing the footprints of the Shepherd, yet no small measure of consolation is to be gained through marking the footsteps of the flock. The sight of human footsteps on the sandy waste has caused us to take heart again. We have exclaimed, "Here one has been who was surely a child of God, and though I am here I may be a child of God too. I have similar failings and weaknesses, and I chide myself for them; but I will not utterly condemn myself and say I cannot be a believer, for I perceive that these spots were on others of God's children too." The perception of our likeness to others who were truly saints has often afforded us a spark of hope when we were in a maze, and dared scarcely hope that we were right towards God.

Frequently the experience of others will help us to thread our way when it winds and twists, and we cannot see an inch before us. The young man thinks that he understands himself, but no old man does so. Ask the man who is best acquainted with himself, and he will tell you that he is increasingly a riddle, and that his experience becomes an enigma more profound every day. The believer feels that he needs the help of the Divine Teacher to enable him to trace the thread of his spiritual life throughout all the tangle of the skein. It needs a grace-taught man to make himself out, and to comprehend what he is, and where he is, and what is the very truth of his life's paradox. At times I ask myself, "Am I all sin, or is there yet a spark of grace?" Anon grace shines like the sun, and then I almost dream that sin is extinct. We are driven to read ourselves in others. We look at the saints of Holy Scripture, and as we mark their lives we say, "I can understand this man better than I can myself; for lookers on see more than players; and now by understanding him, I begin also to comprehend my own position. I calculate my latitude and longitude by observing this star; I estimate the contending influences that rage within me by seeing how others drifted, or stemmed the torrent. I see the strange convolutions of my intertwisted soul in others, and, as in a glass, I discern myself."

But, my brethren, we must take care that we do not wrongly use the memoirs of saints as recorded in Scripture: they are not all for our imitation, but many of them for our warning. You may not do all that a good man has done. If you were to copy certain of the actions of the most gracious men you would soon find yourself more faulty than they; for you would be sure to throw the emphasis upon their errors, but their graces you would probably miss: you would copy their faults and aggravate

them. Follow no man where he does not follow Christ. Above all, the lives of the saints may never be used as an excuse for our faults. We shall not be justified in following afar off because Peter did so, nor in calling fire from heaven upon our enemies because James and John wished to do so, nor in quarrelling because Paul and Barnabas fell into sore contention. We may wisely quote David as an encouragement to a penitent, that God will forgive his sin; but not as an apology for ourselves should we be tempted to commit the sin. We must often use even the saints of God rather as beacons than as harbour-lights, as lighthouses set upon rocky coasts to advise us of the dangers into which they fell. Take care that Holy Scripture be used for holy ends, and that holy men are viewed as helps to holiness, and not as excuses for imperfection. Let us learn from their virtues imitation, from their faults warning, and from both instruction. Judgment is profitable to direct. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; but there is not a sheep of his flock to whom you may do the same. Do whatsoever Jesus does; copy the example of Christ in all its touches, so far as it is imitable, but do not the same even towards the beloved John, though his head be fresh from his Master's bosom; no, nor towards Paul, though he be not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles. Come we, then, dear friends, to use the example of our text, with those due limitations which we have thus set forth.

We have in the text, first, *slumber confessed*,—"I sleep"; but over against this there is *wakefulness claimed*,—"but my heart waketh." Very soon we have *mystery solved*,—how is it that the heart still keeps awake?—"it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." Before we close we shall try, fourthly, to have *a lesson learned* out of the text. May the Holy Spirit make the whole subject profitable to us, and practically influential upon our lives.

I. First, then, here is SLUMBER CONFESSED. The spouse laments her state, and sighs out, "I sleep."

It strikes us at once that her sleep is *a state recognised*. We are astonished that she should say, "I sleep," and we conclude that it is not so profound a sleep as it might be; for when a man can say, "I sleep," he is not altogether steeped in slumber. When children of God perceive their own imperfections and mourn over them, there is evidently a root of virtue in them; when they perceive the decay of their grace there is some grace left undecayed with which they are bemoaning their decline. I would not give you encouragement, dear brother, if you are asleep at all to continue in it; but yet I would say this, that if you mourn over your sluggishness you are not altogether a sluggard, if you feel uneasy in your dulness you are not altogether given over to spiritual stupidity, if you are anxious to be aroused out of your slumber it is certain that you are not given over to sleep yourself into the sepulchre of insensibility. God be thanked that you cannot enjoy pleasant dreams upon the bed of carelessness. You do not sleep as do others; you are evidently not steeped in that fatal slumber of spiritual death in which the dead world is slumbering all around. Infinite mercy has had some dealings with you, and has made you so far to be spiritually awake that you can feel that you sleep, and mournfully confess it.

When a man detects pride within him but has grace enough to long

to be humble, when a man feels hardness of heart but groans about it and wishes to be softened, when a man laments the stubbornness of his will and cries to God to give him full submission, when a man mourns a sluggishness of heart and strives after quickening,—then he has marks and signs of spiritual life, and of an inward energy which will by God's grace cast out his disease and bring him spiritual health. There is life where there is pain; there is growth where there is a yearning of desire. The holy fire still lingers in the breast, though it be so smothered by the ashes that only a little smoke can be discerned; it will revive again, it will kindle and burn up, for it is of God's creating. He who can mournfully say, "I sleep," will one day be wide awake. Be very thankful, therefore, when you have a tender conscience. Cultivate a quick perception, and when you are aware of the slightest defalcation or decline, confess at once to God that you begin to sleep.

Further, as this sleep is a matter recognised, so is it *a matter complained of*. The spouse is not pleased to sleep: she says, "I sleep," but she does not mention it as a matter for congratulation. She is not pleased with her condition. Here again I would remark that it is well for saints, when they perceive that they are in the least degree backsliding, that they should mourn before God, and accuse themselves before him. "Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged." Before another person can hint that you are careless, find it out yourself and mourn over it. Before another can complain of your dulness and say, as the shipmen did to Jonah, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" complain you of yourself. Act tenderly to others, but severely towards yourselves. So all prudent men will do if God keep them prudent.

This sleepiness is not a thing to be indulged in, but to be abhorred. To say the least of it, *it is a low state of enjoyment*. Sleep is peaceful and quiet, but it cannot enjoy the sweets of the senses, and the delights which the mind can receive thereby. Sleep is cousin unto death, and he that slumbers lies at the door of the sepulchre. The image of death is set upon the sleeper's face, and it is a miracle, and a sort of foretaste of the resurrection, that any man doth wake again after he hath fallen into a deep slumber. It is not, therefore, good spiritually for us to be asleep, for then we cannot taste the honey of the word, nor enjoy the fragrance of the ordinances, nor see the beauties of Christ, nor will any of the spiritual passions be delighted, nor our spirit be carried away with holy joy. Therefore when we come into God's house, and we hear the old familiar story of the cross, and it does not charm us, let us mournfully say, "I sleep." When others are ready to dance before the Lord with exultation while singing the solemn psalm, if we ourselves feel no devout gratitude, let us cry self-complainingly, "I perceive that I sleep"; and when at the table the chosen emblems of the bread and wine do not bring the Master near to us, and we go away as hungry as we came, because we have not fed on his body and his blood, then let us say again, "Alas, I sleep, I sleep; for these things would be most sweet and nourishing to me if my spiritual faculties were as they ought to be." If we fail to enjoy the banquets of our Bridegroom's love it must be because a deadness is stealing over us, and we are not so thoroughly alive and awake as we were in days gone by; and this is a condition to be deplored as soon as it is perceived.

We ought to complain of ourselves if we sleep, because *it is a state of anger*. While men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. It is bad, then, to have a drowsy minister and drowsy church officers, for these will not watch the fields for God. He who sleeps is in danger of the thief or the murderer. While Saul lay stretched on the plain Abishai lifted up his spear and said, "Let me smite him but this once." He who sleeps may lose his all, yea, lose himself. Let us, therefore, dread this perilous state; and, if we feel it creeping over us, let us shake ourselves, and say, "I sleep, but I will not give way to slumber. Lord, arouse me."

Sleep is *a state of inaction*. A man cannot do his daily business while his eyes are closed in slumber. There is a somnambulism which can do much; but I know of no spiritual somnambulism. You cannot walk the road to heaven asleep, nor preach the gospel as you should, nor serve God and your generation aright, if you are in a spiritual slumber. I know a great many who are so; alive, I hope, but very sleepy. They do very little, they are too sluggish to attempt much. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets." This was his argument for keeping in the chimney-corner. In truth, the lion is about as real as the monster which has been described of late as prowling over this county of Surrey and devouring women and children all the way from Banstead Downs to Clapham Common. Solomon seems to have been very familiar with this fable of the sluggard's lion, for in another proverb he makes the idler cry, "There is a lion without. I shall be slain in the streets." These poor creatures are so dreamy in spirit that they see a lion everywhere, threatening them if they try to do good in any form; they must needs sit quiet and still, and try to enjoy themselves as best their sleep will allow them to do, for they cannot venture out to work because of the lion. They cannot teach a little Sunday-school class, for there is a lion there! Nor go out to speak to a dozen people in a village: a furious lion is roaring there! In fact, they will be devoured if they leave their easy retirement and put their heads out of doors. God help us to escape this lazy condition. May we live while we live. Let not our souls merely act as salt to keep our carcasses from rottenness, but let them be the seed-plot and hotbed of holy actions out of which shall yet spring glory to God and blessing to our fellow men. If you do not feel active and energetic, make it a matter of self-complaint, and utter the shame-faced confession, "I sleep."

Yet again; this slumber should be not only a matter of complaint as an ill to be dreaded, but it should be regarded as *a fault to be ashamed of*. A Christian man should not say, "I feel dull, careless, and inactive," and make the confession as if he almost deserved to be pitied for a misfortune which was no fault of his. My brother, you may be pitied, but you are also to be blamed, perhaps blamed far more than pitied. An apparent spiritual slumber may creep over us because the body is very weak and sickly, and here pity is allowable, yea, justly due. Certain states and conditions of the flesh no doubt will overcome the spirit, as when even the choicest of the apostles slept in the garden. The Master at first said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" but afterwards he made a generous excuse for them and said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." Make excuses for

time for much prayer: let him wrestle with this deadly foe till he is fully aroused. Falling into indifference on the road to heaven is something like sleeping on the vast plains of snow, where, if a man give way to the natural inclination to slumber which comes on through the intense cold, he may lie down and never rise again. Oh, take care, you that are looking for glory and eternal life, that you yield not to sleep, for your Master cometh, and it may be that within another hour you may hear the midnight cry.

Let us whip ourselves with a strong resolve that we will not sleep. Let us say unto our soul, "Come, wake up! My spirit, thou shalt not sleep. This cannot be. I must not have it, I will not, I dare not. I will goad thee, I will crucify thee to the cross, for thou shalt not slay thyself with suicidal slumber." With this resolve let us seek out means of waking ourselves up. Sometimes we may do well to seek for a better ministry than we have attended. Alas, there are ministries which are as cradles to rock babes to sleep in. There are preachers who charm most wisely if their intent be to send the universe to sleep. Beware of preaching which comforts you in idleness and increases your spiritual insensibility. There are certain preachers who mar the gospel, and tell their tale so heartlessly that methinks if all heaven did rock and reel with tempest a man might yet sleep on so long as such soothing voices lulled his ears. We cannot afford to waste our Sabbaths in listening to another gospel, or in hearing lullabies which make us duller than we were. But if you cannot reach a rousing ministry, read good books: turn to solid gospel treatises, such as the Puritans bequeathed us. Search the Scriptures, and the works of godly men whose words were all on fire; these thrown upon your soul like burning coals may set it on a blaze. Christian converse, too, is another useful means of keeping us awake. John Bunyan mentions that in going over the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims, to prevent drowsiness, fell into good discourse. Here is his quaint rhyme about it:—

> "When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither
> And hear how these two pilgrims talk together:
> Yea, let them learn of them in any wise,
> Thus to keep ope their drowsy, slumb'ring eyes,
> Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
> Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

Imitate this example, but if discourse does not avail, get to work for Christ. This is a very effective way of keeping yourself awake, God the Holy Spirit blessing you in it. In looking after the souls of others your own soul will receive a watering. I do not think that soul-slumber so often visits the active as it does those who have little to do in the Master's service. If active service does not suffice, then cry mightily to God, "I sleep, my Saviour; awake me, I pray thee!" You are half awake already, if you can cry in that fashion. Cry again, "I sleep, my Lord. Use even a rod upon me to wake me rather than I should slumber." You are not asleep, brother, you are already awakened: the bitter anguish of the soul in its horror of its own slumber has already been blessed of God to its arousing.

Anyhow, this sleep is *an evil which must be overcome*. Come, make up your minds to-day, members of this church, that you will not yield

to drowsiness. I hope none of you are inclined to say, "Well, I may get to heaven in this sleepy way, and so what matters it? My fellow members would put me in the ambulance and carry me along like a wounded soldier, and this will be easier than marching at the double day after day." No, no, my brother, we have enough of the invalided and wounded already. We have as many as we can carry of the non-effectives. We need no more. Ask the blessed Physician to make you strong, that you may tug at the guns with the rest of us, or charge the enemy at bayonet point when the trumpet sounds. I said years ago I would sooner lead a dozen real live earnest Christians than a dozen hundred of the half-and-half sort, and this feeling grows with me. I would almost as soon not be a Christian as be as some Christians are: they have enough religion to make them uncomfortable, but not enough to make them useful. They drink such shallow draughts that they increase their responsibility rather than their energy. Oh for a deep draught of grace which shall fill us with all the fulness of God, and make us men in Christ to the utmost capacity of our sanctified manhood. Cold meat may be pleasant, but cold religion is an ill dish to serve to Christ or to ourselves either. God make us like those creatures that are said to live in the fire. May he fill us with his own Spirit, and make us to burn and blaze with an unquenchable heat of love towards him of whom it is said that the zeal of God's house did eat him up. He poured out his soul unto death that he might redeem us to himself, let us see to it that we are altogether his own. With this I leave the sleeping for another theme.

II. We reach the point of the paradox; here is WATCHFULNESS CLAIMED by one who confessed to sleep. "My heart waketh," says the Bride, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." It may seem an odd thing to sleep and yet to be awake, but I commenced by saying that the Christian is a great puzzle. Ralph Erskine's "Believer's Riddle" is a remarkable production, but every word of it may be justified by experience and by Scripture. A man is a mass of contradictions, but a man in Christ is far more so. He truly says:—

> "I'm in my own and others' eyes
> A labyrinth of mysteries."

We are asleep and awake at the same time. As Erskine rhymes it—

> "Both sleeping flesh I have, that rests
> In sloth unto my shame,
> And waking grace, that still protests
> Against this lazy frame."

There is an inner life within every Christian which can never die, and there is about him an inward death which can never rise to life. Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" hence this divine life, though it may grow weak and feeble, and slumbering, yet never passes into the condition of absolute death, or even of complete insensibility. Somewhat of heaven is about the man of God when the earth encompasses him most. "Sin shall not have dominion over you": God has the throne still, even when Satan rages most. This inward life shows itself usually in the *uneasiness* of the declining heart. When a believer feels that he is not what he ought to be, nor what he wants to be, he

cannot be happy. He cannot rest and be content. There was a time when such a condition would have satisfied him, but now he is distressed beyond measure, and, like Noah's dove, finds no rest for the sole of his foot. Hear him sing in the minor key—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

He sleeps, but his heart beats, sighs, and palpitates with dire unrest.

The inner life shows itself, too, in *desire*, for the heart is the seat of desire, and it leads the man to say "I am not what I would be. I live at a poor dying rate: Christ's love is so great to me, and mine to him so chill. Lord, lift me out of this frozen state. I cannot bear this grave of lethargy. Lord, bring my soul out of prison! Give me more grace; give me to love Jesus better, and to be more like him. Poor as I am, I long to be enriched by thy love and mercy; O visit me with thy salvation!" Such a pleading heart is still awake, though the mind may be dull. The Lord judges us by our earnest desires more than by our accomplishments. An old writer says, if you send a man on horseback for the doctor, if the horse be a sorry jade that cannot move quickly you praise the man when you see him whipping and spurring and doing his best to hasten. You do not blame him for that which is beyond his power. So saith he,—oftentimes when our desires do whip and spur our languid spirits God sees what a rate we would go at if we could, and he takes the will for the deed. Often our desires are so aroused that we would harness the lightning and bit the tempest if we could, and spur both to a swifter speed. Desires prove wakefulness; "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

The spouse gave another proof of her wakefulness by her *discernment*. She says, "It is the voice of my beloved, that knocketh." Even when half asleep she knew her Lord's voice. You may catch a true believer at his worst, but he still knows the gospel from anything else, and can detect another gospel in a moment. You shall come forth with all your eloquence, your poetry and sweet concocted phrases, with a something that is not the gospel of the blessed God, and you shall for a moment please the ear of the Christian, because of the literary excellence of your address, but he soon detects you. It is true of all Christ's sheep, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." The awakening believer soon perceives that the most musical voice of a stranger has not the charm in it which is found in the voice of his Lord. Yea, he soon closes his ear to it in disgust and in holy trembling lest he should be deceived. His resolve is, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." He determines to be deaf to other voices, but to his Redeemer he saith, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Blessed is he who in his dullest state can still discern and discriminate and cry, "It is the voice of my beloved."

This wakefulness of heart shows itself often in the soul *chiding* itself. "I sleep," saith she. She would not have blamed herself as I have tried to describe her doing if she had not been in some measure awake.

This blessed living wakefulness within the heart will by-and-by display itself in *action*. The heart will wake up all that is within us, and we shall hasten to our Beloved. It is wonderful how a true Christian flies back to his God so soon as the Spirit of the Lord sets him free from the net. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Brethren, you and I cannot rest anywhere short of Christ. When we were ravens we could rest on our own wings, or on the carrion of this world, but now that we have been made doves we must seek our Noah and his ark. A friend at the back of this Tabernacle furnished me with some pigeons but a little while ago. They were taken home to Norwood, and shut up for a few days, and well fed, in the hope that they would stay with us; but no sooner were they set at liberty than they soared aloft, made three circles in the sky, and then flew direct for this spot. How I wished on my sick bed that I had their wings, and could hasten hither too. It is so with believers. The devil may put us in captivity and shut us up a while, but give us the opportunity and our heart knows the way back to Jesus. The spouse hath dove's eyes, and she seeth from afar: she makes short work of it, and is back again with all the speed of the chariots of Amminadib.

This puzzle of "I sleep, but my heart waketh," has been experienced by thousands. I quote no solitary instances, there are hundreds of the same. I lately met with a little poem by Thomas Vaughan, which touched my heart, because it so aptly described my state. I will read it, to show you that the paradox of a believer's life is no fiction of mine, but is the frequent experience of God's people. In a little out-of-the way poem, which perhaps no one of you has ever seen, Vaughan quaintly sings:—

"My sweetest Jesus! 'twas thy voice, 'If I
Be lifted up I'll draw all to the sky.'
Yet I am here: I'm stifled in the clay,
Shut up from thee, and the fresh East of day.
I know thy hand's not short; but I'm unfit,
A foul, unclean thing! to take hold of it.
I am all dirt: nor can I hope to please
Unless in mercy thou lov'st a disease.
Diseases may be cur'd, but who'll reprieve
Him that is dead? Tell me, my God, I live.
'Tis true, I live: but I so sleep withal
I cannot move, scarce hear when thou dost call,
Sin's lullabies charm me when I would come,
But draw me after thee, and I will run.
Thou know'st I'm sick: let me not feasted be,
But keep a diet, all prescrib'd by thee.
Should I carve for myself, I would exceed
To surfeits soon, and by self-murder bleed.
I ask for stones and scorpions, but still crost
And all for love: should'st thou grant, I were lost.
Dear Lord, deny me still: and never sign
My will, but when that will agrees with thine.

And when this conflict's past, and I appear
To answer, what a patient I was here,
How I did weep when thou did'st woo: repine
At thy best sweets, and in a childish whine
Refuse thy proffer'd love; yet cry and call,
For rattles of my own to play withal:
Look on thy cross and let thy blood come in
When mine shall blush as guilty of my sin.
Then shall I live, being rescued in my fall,
A text of mercy to thy creatures all.
Who having seen the worst of sins in me,
Must needs confess, the best of love's in thee."

not this writer dip his pen into your soul's sorrows?

I. Spare me a minute or two while I dwell on the head of MYSTERY ED. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." How doth her heart wake? because the voice and knock of her Beloved are heard. Every of God has a wondrous union with Christ. "Because I live," saith st, "ye shall live also." Ask you why you are alive in such a of death and grave of sin as your poor nature is? You live ıse Christ lives; and you cannot die till he does. This is why you ot sleep as do others, because he does not so sleep. "He that ɛth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," and till Christ's spiritual ıhall altogether slumber out into forgetfulness and inaction yours r shall. The mystic union between yourselves and him secures you destruction, which apart from him would sweep you away as with a n. This is why, dear friends, when you get where you should not ou cannot be happy because Jesus is not happy when you are there. groans over your follies; they cost him wounds, and bloody sweat, leath, and they must cost you something, too, if you indulge them. field all tangled with the brambles tore the shepherd when he ht you out, and the briars will tear you also if you wander there. reason why you are awake at all is because Jesus calls you. His rings in your ears through his word both heard and read. He than calls, he knocks at your heart by affliction, by mercy, by ing, by comfort. He will do more with you yet if you are his; ill put in his hand by the hole of the door, and then you shall open im and he will come and sup with you and you with him. The ery is all solved, the saint would be a sinner if it were not that he e with the sinner's Saviour: the living believer would be a lump of ı and corruption if it were not that he is one with him who is the rrection and the life, who hath said, "whosoever believeth in me never die," and again, "though he were dead yet shall he live." t a blessing is this vital union with the ever-blessed Head, immortal unslumbering!

I. Now for THE LESSON LEARNED. It is this, *be very careful ı you possess great joys*, for in this instance the spouse had been with Beloved in choice fellowship, and yet was soon drowsy. He had ı her to drink abundantly, and he had feasted with her, but no ɛr had the sun set than she said, "I sleep." We are singular ures. Our very perfect brethren, although they do not see it, rally exhibit some glaring imperfection if you let them talk for minutes. If you knock at the door to see if Mr. Pride is at

home, you need not praise them long before he will show his full-length portrait. We are thankful for these brethren so far as they are saints, for good people are scarce; but I wish they would not tell us so much about their saintliness, for I have noticed that great cry often goes with little wool, and the noisiest thing that goes down the street is the dust-cart. He who makes most noise about his own perfection has the least of it. Let us be careful whenever we rise to the summit of the hill; careful to keep up, careful that we so act when we are up that we do not come down with a run. Whenever the Lord visits you entertain him right heartily. Be careful that nothing grieves him, lest he depart. High joys may produce slumber; the chosen three upon the mount Tabor were soon overcome with heaviness. At the too transporting sight of the transfigured Saviour darkness covered them. Mind what you do when on the mount; be careful to carry a full cup with a steady hand.

Next, *when you are blaming yourselves for your own work, do not forget the work of the Spirit in you.* "I sleep": smite your heart for that, but do not forget to add if it be true, "My heart waketh." Bless God for any grace you have, even if it be but little. What if I am not sanctified as I wish to be and shall be, yet I am perfectly justified! What if I do not exhibit my Father's likeness so completely as I hope to do, yet I am his child! What if as yet I do not produce all the fruits of the Spirit, yet I have the germs of them, the buds and blossoms, and soon I shall have the ripe fruit. In Aaron's rod we see that the same power that could put the buds and blossoms on a dry stick could put the almonds there too.

Lastly, *make sure above all things that you have that true faith which knows the voice of Jesus.* The spouse had not awaked if it had not been for the charm of Jesus' voice which affected even her drowsy faculties. Some persons can be more easily awakened by the voices of those they love than by any other means. The charm of memory, the charm of intimate affection, the charm of delight, gives music to some tongues: let your ear find all its music in the voice of Jesus. Know his voice. He saith, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." God bless you, dear friends, with a faith that trusts Jesus, knows his voice, and follows him, and may we be aroused out of all our sleepiness, if we are at all drowsy, into a holy wakefulness, so as to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength while we live. Come, Holy Spirit, and give us this privilege, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxviii.; Solomon's Song, iv. v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—421, 620, 805.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED, AND MEN UNSAVED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—Jeremiah viii. 20.

THIS is a very mournful chapter, especially if we include in it, as we rightly should, the first verse of the ninth chapter: "O that my head were waters." The passage is full of lamentation and woe, and yet it is somewhat singular that the chief mourner here is not one who needed chiefly to be in trouble. Jeremiah was under the especial protection of God, and he escaped in the evil day. Even when Nebuchadnezzar was exercising his utmost rage, Jeremiah was in no danger, for the heart of the fierce monarch was kindly towards him. "Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." The man of God, who personally had least cause to mourn, was filled with heavy grief, while the people who were about to lose their all, and to lose their lives, still remained but half awakened; complaining, but not repenting; afraid, but yet not humbled before God. None of them uttered such a grievous lament as that which came from the heart and mouth of the prophet. Their heads were full of idle dreams, while his had become waters; their eyes were full of wantonness, while his were a fountain of tears. He loved them better than they loved themselves. Is it not strange that it should be so, that the physician should be more anxious than the sick man? Perhaps, however, it is not so singular that the shepherd should care more for the flock than the sheep care for themselves. When the sheep are men it is certainly an unreasonable thing! The weeping prophet cries, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt;" he was more hurt than they were. A preacher whom God sends will often feel more care for the souls of men than men feel for themselves or their own salvation. Is it not sad that there should be an anxious pain in the heart of one who is himself saved, while those who are unsaved, and are obliged to own it, feel little or no concern? To see a man in jeopardy of his life, and all around him alarmed for his danger, while he himself

is half asleep, is a sad sight. See yonder man about to be condemned to die, standing at the bar, the judge putting on the black cap is scarcely able to pronounce the sentence for emotion, and all around him in the court break down with distress on his account, while he himself is brazen-faced and feels no more than the floor he stands upon! How hardened has he become! Pity is lost upon him, if pity ever can be lost. Such a sad sight we constantly see in our congregations: those who are "condemned already" on account of sin are altogether indifferent to their awful peril, while their godly parents are greatly distressed for them, Christian people are pleading with them, and earnest messengers from God expostulating with them. Heaven and earth are moved for them, and yet they are unaffected. Oh that it might not be so here this morning! May none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. May God of his infinite mercy strike the rock, and make the waters of penitence to gush out from it. May his transforming hand turn stone into flesh, and cause a holy tenderness to banish all stubbornness and insensibility. Such is my agonising cry to the Holy Spirit.

Certainly there ought to be dismay, and even terror, in the heart of any who are compelled to use my text in reference to themselves. Those few words, "We are not saved!" sound like a peal of thunder. They should cut the soul as with a case of knives—"We are not saved!" What worse thing can men say of themselves? We are now under the abiding wrath of God; for "we are not saved!" We must soon stand before the judgment seat of God, and then we shall be condemned of the great Judge, for "we are not saved!" We shall ere long be driven from his presence and from the glory of his power, for "we are not saved!" We shall then be shut out in outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, for "we are not saved!" Had men but reason, or having reason would they but use it upon the most important of all subjects, surely they would cry out in the bitterness of their souls, "Oh that our heads were water and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night till we had found our Saviour and he had washed away our sin and saved us." How saddening to see the loaded waggons of harvest bearing no real blessing to us, and to watch the clusters on the vine ripen all unblessed! Alas for that summer which amid all its flowers yields us no perfume of peace or joy. On the other hand, my brethren, how blessed to feel that the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and blessed be God we are saved! Now let winter come with all its blasts, we have nothing to fear, for wrapped in our Saviour's righteousness, and hidden in the cleft of his side, we shall outlive every storm.

I earnestly pray the Lord to bless the words I am about to speak, that they may be rendered useful to many undecided persons to lead them to decision, and induce them to give themselves up to Christ at once. May the Holy Spirit work this blessed result in thousands. I have so long been silent that I am hungering to speak with power. Come Holy Spirit! Come!

First, I shall look at the text as *a complaint*—"We are not saved;" and, secondly, I shall suggest that out of it ought to come *consideration:* those who utter the complaint should be led thereby to solemn consideration.

I. First, we have before us the language of COMPLAINT. These Jews

said, "The seasons are going by, the year is spending itself, the harvest is past, the vintage also is ended, and yet we are not saved." Some of them were captives in Babylon, and they fondly expected to be brought back from the distant land, but they were disappointed. They hoped that when the produce of the Nile had been reaped Egyptian troops would march against Nebuchadnezzar and break his power. Others of them had fled into the defenced cities, and taken refuge behind the walls of Jerusalem, and they also dreamed that the march of the Chaldeans would be stopped, and the land would be delivered from their invasion as soon as the summer heats were over. The rescue did not come; indeed, they could from Jerusalem hear the neighing of the Babylonian horses: "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein." Therefore they complained that their hopes had failed. In effect they complained of God that he had not saved them, as if he was under some obligation to have done so, as if they had a kind of claim upon him to interpose: and so they spoke as if they were an ill-used people, a nation that had been neglected by their Protector. Husbandmen had gathered in the harvest, and vine-dressers had gleaned the grapes, yet they had not been cared for, but left to suffer: despite their hopes, they were not saved. Certain persons fall into the same state of mind in these days. They know that they are not saved, but they do not blame themselves for it; the fault lies,—they would not like to say where it does lie, but they will not own that it lies in themselves. They are not saved, and somebody should be blamed for it, or perhaps nobody, but they mention the fact, not as a confession of which they are ashamed, but as a misfortune for which they are to be pitied.

This complaint was a very unjust one, for there were many reasons why they were not saved and why God had not delivered them.

The first was *they had looked to the wrong quarter:* they expected that the Egyptians would deliver them. You remember that in the reign of Zedekiah the Jews revolted from their subjection to the Babylonians because they hoped that the king of Egypt would come up and fight with the Babylonian power. Those who were captives hoped that yet the great armies of the Pharaohs might break down the might of Chaldea, and so they looked to Egypt for help,—an old fault with Israel and a gross folly, for why should they look to the house of bondage for succour? The same folly dwells in multitudes of men. They are not saved, and they never will be while they continue to look where they do look. All dependence upon ourselves is looking to Egypt for help, and leaning our weight upon a broken reed. Whether that dependence upon self takes the form of relying upon ceremonies, or depending upon prayers, or trusting in our own attempts to improve ourselves morally, it is still the same proud folly of self-dependence. Vain is all searching for legal righteousness, hoping to merit something of God, or to do something without help from on high, for the Lord himself has assured us that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. My friend, you may have been very earnest and serious about divine things, but if you have looked in any measure or degree to what you are, or can do, or what any man can do

for you, it is no wonder that you are not saved, for there is no salvation there. I am afraid some think that it is a great thing to sit under a faithful minister, that if the gospel be thoroughly preached they may naturally expect that if they take a seat at the place they will be saved. But all dependence upon ministers is only another form of superstitious confidence in priestcraft. All trust but that which is found in Jesus is a delusion and a falsehood. No man can help you. Though Noah, Samuel, and Moses prayed for you, their prayers could not avail unless you believed in the blood of Jesus; there is salvation nowhere else. Though the whole church were to unite in one protracted intercession, and determine that all its ministers should preach to you alone for the next seven years, there would be no more hope of your being saved then than now, unless you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the salvation of the sons of men. The most fruitful of harvests may pass and the most genial of summers may smile upon you, but while you look to yourself no sunshine from God shall cause you to flourish. Eternal barrenness is the portion of those who trust in man and make flesh their arm. While men go about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ, they shall be like the woman who spent all her living upon physicians, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse.

Those people had *prided themselves upon their outward privileges;* they had presumed upon their favoured position, for they say in the nineteenth verse, "Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?" Because they belonged to the chosen nation, because the Lord had entrusted them with the sacred oracles, and manifested himself to their fathers, therefore they thought that they might sin with impunity, and reckon upon being delivered in the day of danger. I do not know how many of you here may be depending upon outward religiousness, or indulging some kind of thought that, apart from your personal faith in Christ, you will be saved by your pious connections and hallowed relationships; but if that is what you are depending upon, rest assured you will be deceived. Vain are the baptism or the confirmation of your youth, faith in Jesus is the one thing needful; vain is the fact that you were born of Christian parents, ye must be born again; vain is your sitting as God's people sit, and standing as they stand, in the solemn service of the sanctuary, your heart must be changed; vain is your observance of the Lord's-day, and vain your Bible reading and your form of prayer night and morning, unless you are washed in Jesus' blood; vain are all things without living faith in the living Jesus. Though you had been descended from an unbroken line of saints, though you had no unconverted relative, your ancestry and lineage would not avail you; the sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. All the external privileges that can be heaped upon you, though you had sermons piled up and gospel services heaped on them, as the giants piled mountain upon mountain, Pelion upon Ossa, that they might climb to heaven, would be useless; there is no reaching to salvation by such means. If your reliance be upon external ordinances, or professions or privileges in any measure or degree, no wonder that the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and you are not saved, for you never will be saved till doomsday while you look in that

rection. Look like sinners to your Saviour and you shall be saved, ıt not else.

Thirdly, there was another and very powerful reason why these people ere not saved, for, with all their religiousness and their national boast to God's being among them, they *had continued in provoking the Lord.* e says in the nineteenth verse, "Why have they provoked me to anger ith their graven images and with strange vanities?" They lived in sin, sobeying God to his face; they set up new idols, and imported false ities from foreign lands, and yet they said, "We are not saved." ould they have the Lord sanction their degrading idolatry by sending em deliverance? Do you know a man who goes frequently into ill mpany, and gets intoxicated, and yet comes to hear the gospel, and urmurs that he is not saved? Is he not mad? Let me speak plainly him. Do you think that you are going to heaven to reel about the ly streets? Shall the pure heavens be polluted by your profanities? ou are dreadfully mistaken if you fancy so. Another person indulges st, lives an unclean life, and yet he comes in and listens to the word God as one who has a loving ear for it, and he also complains that is not saved. O unclean man, how canst thou dream of salvation ıilst thou art defiled with filthiness? What, thou and thy harlot, embers of Christ! Oh, sir, thou knowest not my pure and holy aster. He receiveth sinners, but he rejecteth those who delight in eir iniquities. Thou must have done with the indulgence of sin if ou wouldst be cleansed from the guilt of it. There is no going on in ansgression, and yet obtaining salvation: it is a licentious supposition. ırist comes to save us from our sins, not to make it safe to do evil. ıat blood which washes out the stain brings with it also a hatred of e thing which made the stain. Sin must be relinquished, or salvation nnot be received. I spoke very plainly just now, but some here pure heart little know how plainly we must speak if we are to reach me men's consciences, for it shames me when I think of some who ar after year indulge in secret sin, and yet they are regular frequenters the house of God. You would think they surely were already converted, soon would be when you saw them here, but if you followed them me you would quite despair of them. O lovers of sin do not deceive urselves, you will surely reap that which you sow. How can grace ign in you while you are the slaves of your own passions? How can be while you are anchored to a secret sin that you should be borne ong by the current of grace towards the desired haven of safety? ther you must leave your sin or leave all hope of heaven; if you ld your sin hell will ere long hold you. Jesus was not sent to be the inister of sin; he never came into the world to bleed and die to make e way of the transgressors easy by enabling them to be vicious without ık. The friend of sinners is the enemy of sin. There is a religion that ll let you pay a shilling or two and purchase priestly absolution, but is we protest against. Such a faith may well breed iniquity. What n it be but like Egypt's Nile, when in the days of Moses it became the ıitful mother of ten thousand unclean frogs? Under the religion of ırist absolution for the past is only to be obtained through faith in sus, and that faith brings with it repentance for former offences, and hange of life for days to come. Wherefore do men say "We are not

saved" when they are still hugging their iniquities? They may as well hope to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, as to find salvation while they abide in sin. May God deliver us all from the love of sin, for such a deliverance is salvation.

Again, there was another reason why they were not saved, and that was because *they made being saved from trouble the principal matter.* Many make a great mistake about salvation; they mistake the meaning of the term, and to them salvation means being delivered from going down into the pit of hell, just as to these Jews it meant rescue from Nebuchadnezzar. Now, the right meaning of salvation is purification from evil. These people never thought of this: they never said, "We are not cleansed, we are not made holy," but "we are not saved." If their cry had been, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we have not yet conquered sin," that would have been a mark of something good and true, but they showed no trace of it. There is not much in a man's desiring to be saved if he means by that an escape from the punishment of his offences. Was there ever a murderer yet who did not wish to be saved from the gallows? When a man is tied up to be flogged for a deed of brutal violence, and his back is bared for the lash, depend upon it he repents of what he did; that is to say, he repents that he has to suffer for it; but that is all, and a sorry all too. He has no sorrow for the agony which he inflicted on his innocent victim; no regret for maiming him for life. What is the value of such a repentance? Here is the point, my hearers; do you wish to have new hearts? If you do you shall have them. Do you wish to leave the sins you have loved? Do you desire to live as Christ lived? Do you wish to keep the commandments of God? Do you sigh for purity of life? Do you wish henceforth to be as God would have you to be, just, loving, kind, chaste, after the example of the great Redeemer? If so, then truly the desire you have cometh of God; but if all you want is to be able to die without dread, that you may wake up in the next world and not be driven down to the bottomless pit, if that is all, there is nothing gracious in it, and it is no wonder that you should say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." You do not know what being saved means. God teach you to love holiness, and there shall not pass another harvest, nay not another day, before you shall be saved; indeed, that very love is the dawn of salvation. Seek salvation as the kingdom of God within you, seek it first and seek it now, and you shall not be denied.

Again, there was another reason why these people were not saved and could not be. Read the ninth verse, and see their fault and folly: "Lo, *they have rejected the word of the Lord*, and what wisdom is in them?" We hear persons complain that they are not saved, though they neglect the saving word. They go to a place of worship and therefore wonder that they are not saved; how can they be when that which they hear is not the object of their heart's attention? Do you read your Bible privately? Did you ever read it with an earnest prayer that God would teach you what you really are, and make you to be a true believer in Christ? Have you done that just as earnestly as you studied a book when you were trying to pass an examination? I do not know what calling you follow, but I will suppose, for instance, that you wish to be a chemist; if so, you go through a course of studies, and

you acquaint yourself with certain books, in order that you may pass an examination. You stick to your work, for you know that you will not pass unless you are well informed as to the matters needful to your profession. Do you show the same diligence in reference to your soul and your God? Have you ever read your Bible with anything like the same intensity with which a man must study a class-book in order to pass his examinations? Have you read it with regard to yourself, asking God to teach you its meaning, and to make the sense of it press upon your conscience? Do you reply, "I have not done that"? Why then do you wonder that you are not saved? To put a slighter test than the former: when you hear the gospel, do you always enquire, "What has this to do with me?" or do you listen to it as a general truth with which you have no peculiar concern? What a difference is perceptible in hearers! Numbers of persons have come hither at this time merely to hear Spurgeon preach, and form an estimate of him. Is this a fit errand for God's day, and for an assembly gathered for worship? Do not imagine that we are flattered by such attentions. We do not covet such hearers. What care I about their estimate? A poor soul that wants to find Christ is a diamond in my eyes, but he who comes to hear me because of public talk is a common pebble that one might sling away, only it is well that even he should hear the word if perchance God might bless him. Many of you Christian people hear sermons that you may remember well-turned sentences and pithy sayings, or that you may gauge the preacher's earnestness, and judge whether he is likely to be useful. Hearing for others is a very common amusement. There is a deal of difference between walking through a baker's shop when you are well filled and counting all the loaves upon the shelves, and rushing in at the door to get a bit of bread at once, for fear of dying of starvation. Water seen as a picturesque object by a traveller is one thing, but a living draught swallowed by one dying of thirst is quite a different matter. O that men would treat the gospel as a necessary of life, which they must each one feed upon or perish. That is the style of hearing when a man prays that the word of God may search him, and try him. It is well when the hearer bares his bosom and cries, "Lord, cut this cancer out of my soul, I pray thee. I beseech thee, let me live!" That kind of hearing ends in saving. "Incline your ear," saith the great Lord, "and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." "Hearken diligently unto me," saith he again; and in so doing he certifies that diligent hearkening shall bring a blessing with it. Alas, with the bulk of hearers the word goes in at one ear and out at the other. The noise of God's voice is drowned by the din of the world's traffic, the six days crush the influence of the seventh, and it is no wonder that January comes and December goes, and yet worldlings are not saved. They never will be while they slumber as they do.

There is a further reason why some men are not saved, and that is because *they have a great preference for slight measures.* They love to hear the flattering voice whispering—"Peace, peace, where there is no peace"; and they choose those for leaders who will heal their hurt slightly. They wish for something very comfortable, and in their folly they prefer poisoned sweets to healthful salts. "I felt so miserable," said one, "when I left that place that I said I would never enter it again." It

was a foolish vow. He who is wise will go where the word has most power, both to kill and to make alive. Do you want a physician when you call upon him to please you with a flattering opinion? Must he needs say, "My dear friend, it is a very small matter; you want nothing but pleasant diet, and you will soon be all right"? If he talks thus smoothly when he knows that a deadly disease is commencing its work upon you, is he not a deceiver? Do you not think you are very foolish if you pay such a man your guinea, and denounce his neighbour who tells you the plain truth? Do you want to be deluded? Are you eager to be duped? Do you want to dream of heaven, and then wake up in hell? Have I such an idiot here? May heaven save him from his ruinous folly.

For my part, I should like to know the worst of my case, and things must be very bad with any one of you who cannot say the same. When a merchant dares not face his books, you know where he is. When he says to his clerk, "No, no, I do not want to know on which side the balance stands. I cannot bear to be worried. I dare say money will come in as well as go out, and my credit will raise me another loan. Things will come round, and the less we dive into difficulties the better." We shall hear of that gentleman very speedily in the Bankruptcy Court, I think. He is in the same condition spiritually who does not dare to face himself, but would rather not be troubled with questions and examinations. What, dare you not look yourself in the face? Have you covered up the looking-glass? Have you hid the word of God from yourselves, and dare not see how you look? Ay, then be sure you are in an evil plight. While men will not have the thorough-going truth preached to them, while they like some siren strain, while they would fain listen to soft music and float upon gentle streams that bear them down to destruction, there is little hope but what harvests and summers will come and go and they will not be saved.

All this while these people have wondered that they were not saved, and yet *they never repented of their sin.* The Lord himself witnesses against them, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." Repentance was a jest with them, they had not grace enough even to feel shame, and yet they made a complaint against God, saying, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." What monstrous folly was this! Where has the Lord given half a promise to those who will not confess and forsake their sins? How can impenitent sinners hope that they should be forgiven?

We have said enough upon this unjustifiable complaint.

II. Now, may the Spirit of God help us while we would lead unconverted persons for a few minutes into the CONSIDERATION of this matter.

First consideration, "*we are not saved.*" I do not want to talk, I want you to think. "We are not saved." Put it in the personal, first person singular. Will everyone here only do me the favour of saying that to himself if it is true, "I am not saved! I am not saved! I am not saved from sin, I love it still. I am not saved from guilt, I am condemned for my failure to keep the law. I am not saved from wrath,

I am not saved from judgment, I am not saved from the eternal curse. I am not saved! My dear child in heaven is for ever happy, but I am not saved. My dear wife is a happy Christian, but I am not saved. I am one of a family where many have been converted, but I am not saved. I am a grey-headed old man, and I am not saved. I am beloved in my family by my dear mother, for I am yet a child, but though she prays for me I am not saved." "I am a member of a church and am not saved." Are you obliged to say that, any of you? Be honest, then. Do not cover up the truth, however terrible it may be; better far to face it. What if some one must confess, "I am a preacher of the gospel, but I am not saved." Oh, my heart, what terror is here! It is an awful thing if anybody here has to say, "I am a teacher in a Sunday school, and this afternoon the little ones will gather round me, but I am not saved. People respect me, they say I have all things good about me, but I have not the one thing needful, I am not saved." Teachers, does this touch any one of you? I pray you let it have its due influence. Now you down here in the area, and you in these galleries, will you do one of the two things; either say "By God's grace I have believed in Jesus and I am saved," or else just sigh out silently in your soul, "I am not saved." It will do you good to end all questions, and know once for all whether you are in Christ or not.

Furthermore, not only am I not saved, but *I have been a long time not saved.* Let me put language into the mouths of those who are ruining themselves by delay. "Time flies. How quickly it is gone! I was a young man a very little while ago, now I am getting into middle age, getting a little bald, grey hairs are upon me here and there. Why, dear me, here are grandchildren come—it seems but yesterday that I was married. Yes, harvests have passed, vintages have been gathered, and I am not saved. Twenty years ago I sat listening to this same preacher, and I was not saved then; and I remember how he touched my conscience, but all those years have gone, and I am not saved. The world has had its opportunities and used them; they sowed and they reaped their harvests. The vine-dresser used the knife and the vine was pruned, and in due season he gathered the clusters, but I have had no harvest, I have known no vintage. I have made money, I have got on in business, or at least I have just paid my way and supported my family, but I have had no spiritual harvest; no, for I never sowed. I have had no spiritual vintage, for I was never pruned. I never went to the great Husbandman and asked him to dig about me and make me fruitful to his name. What opportunities I had! I have been through revivals, but the sacred power passed over me; I remember several wonderful occasions when the Spirit of God was poured out, and yet I am not saved."

Worse still, *habits harden.* "If I was not saved during the last twenty or thirty years I am less likely to be impressed now. I do not feel as I once did. Sometimes the vile unbelief which now taints the very air creeps over me, and I am half a sceptic. Considerations that used to thrill me, and make my flesh creep, are now put before me, but I seem like a piece of steel—nay, I do not even rust under the word, I am unimpressible. Harvests have dried me, summers have parched me, age has shrivelled my soul: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer, I am getting to be old hay, or as withered weeds fit for the

burning." It is a dreadful consideration for a man to turn over in his mind, but it is a very needful one, for it is an undoubted fact that every year fixes the character and engraves the lines of evil deeper in the nature. Harvests and summers leave us worse if they do not see us mend. As true as you are alive, unless God of infinite mercy arouse you out of your present condition to seek and immediately find Christ, and obtain everlasting life, some of you will settle down into a condition which will be the eternal state of your hearts. O for grace to repent at once, ere yet the wax has cooled and the seal is set for ever.

The last summer will soon come, and the last harvest will soon be reaped, and you, dear friend, must go to your long home. I will apply it mainly to myself: I must go up stairs for the last time, and I must lay me down upon the bed from which I shall never rise again; if I am unsaved my room will be a prison chamber to me, and the bed will be hard as a plank, if I have to lie there and know that I must die,—that a few more days or hours must end this struggle for existence, and I am bound to stand before God. O my God, save me from an unready death-bed! Save these people from dying and passing into hell! You will have no doubts about it then, you know; you will see clearly that you are bound to stand before God. This naked spirit of mine, disrobed of its body, must appear before the Judge! What shall I do? What shall I say? Before my Maker's burning eyes, stripped naked to my shame, oh! what shall I do? And when I speechless stand before him, by my silence owning to my guilt, what shall I do? The gate of heaven is shut, I cannot enter there. I have not the password; I have rejected the way thither; I have rejected Christ, who is the King of the place; oh! whither must I go? I will not paint the picture. Souls, I charge you by everything that is rational within you, escape for your lives, and seek to find eternal salvation for your undying spirits. You are not dogs nor cats, nor horses nor cattle, as men tell you; you are nobler things, and an immortality awaits you, and you shall make to-day that immortality the most awful curse that can fall upon you, or a privilege infinite, unutterable. It is a grand alternative. God help us by his infinite mercy to choose eternal holiness and everlasting joy, and choose it now.

Come, let us consider a little longer a few practical truths which may be of service. It is quite clear that, if you are to get right, you must not go on in the old way. The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and by the way in which you have been going on you are not saved. There must be a change of tactics. Salvation must be thought of in another light, and sought for in another spirit. Come, my friend, if you are to find salvation you must be more earnest about it, you must be more intense about it; there must be a greater valuing of this salvation, and a more solemn resolve that if heaven or earth or hell can yield it to you, you will have it, for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,

and the violent take it by force." Never did a man sleep himself into eternal life. Salvation is all of grace, but sluggards have no grace. The Lord does not work in us to sleep and to slumber, but to will and to do. Men reach the Celestial City, not by drowsiness, but by their spirits being stirred to feel that there is nothing else that is worth a thought compared with going on pilgrimage to glory.

There is one thing certain, that, as the harvests have past and the summer is ended and we have not been saved, we must have been looking in the wrong place. Very likely we have been looking to something on earth for salvation. If so, we have not found it, because it is not there. The prophet enquires: "Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there?" He knew that there was none in that region which could meet his people's dreadful hurt. There was a balm in Gilead, but it was the resin of a tree; there were physicians there, but they were mostly quacks, that duped the people. If there had been any true balm and any real physician there, the health of the daughter of his people would have been recovered. No, my hearer, there is no balm in Gilead for you. The balm of Gilead was only good for certain bodily wounds and sores, but not for cuts and wounds and sores like these, for these are in the soul. The physicians of Gilead could only heal some few complaints, and seldom enough did they heal even these, but all the physicians of Gilead in a row cannot heal your *complaint.* I will tell you of another and better health-resort than Gilead—it is Calvary. Where Jesus bled you will find a balm; where Jesus lives you will find a physician.

Another thing must have suggested itself to you while I have been preaching, dear friend, if you have listened in earnest; and it is this, that the great point must be that if I am to be saved *I must get rid of sin.* I will again speak for those whom I address. "I have been thinking that I should undergo some strange transformation, and some kind of mysterious shock, or have a vision or see some strange sight, and that then I should say I am a converted man. This morning I discover that the main point is to get rid of sin; it must be driven out of my heart. I have not only to leave off the act of it, and the thought of it, but all love to it must go. I cannot be a saved man unless that is the case." If you have kept pace with the preacher so far, I think the next thought will come,—"Then this is deep water; this is a place where my own strength utterly fails me. If I must have a new heart—well, I cannot make myself a new heart. If the very love of sin has to go, I cannot accomplish that; I can stop outside the theatre, but I cannot prevent my wanting to go in. I can renounce dishonesty, but I cannot help having an itching palm. Even if I dare not transgress yet I may feel the wish to do so if the punishment could be escaped. This makes the matter too hard for unaided nature; since it is true that unless the love of

sin is gone nothing is done. God must help me, or this will never be accomplished. This is the centre of the truth. Your great Creator must come and make you over again. His dear Son must come and end your captivity to the power of evil. He has come, he has died. Nothing can ever take out the stains of your past sin but the blood of the Son of God. Nothing can take from you the love of sin but the application of the atoning blood, and the work of the Spirit upon your entire nature, creating you anew in Christ Jesus. "Oh," saith one, "I see it all now. I seem to have come up against a wall of rock, and I can go no further. I wonder not that the summers have gone and the harvests have ended, when it is like this; for now I am brought up before a dread impossibility. What can I do?" Thou canst do this. God helping you, trust Christ to do it all. Throw thyself down at his feet. "Saviour, Saviour, from the highest heaven look down, here is a sinner in his blood. I read of others that when they were in their blood thou saidst to them, Live! Say that to me. Here is one condemned, and near to die; save him, forgive him impute thy righteousness, make me to be accepted in the Beloved. I trust thee!" Do you indeed trust Jesus? Is it true that you believe on him? Then you are saved! His merit is yours, his blood has cleansed you the moment you believe in him, it is done: you shall not love sin again. You shall be tempted, and often have to groan because of secret lustings that will linger there; but you have a new life now, for you have believed in Jesus, and that new life will abhor sin, and will fight it, and will conquer it, and God will help you, and the Spirit will dwell in you, and you shall get sin more and more under your feet—yea, you shall bruise Satan under your feet ere long, and you shall triumph, and one day you shall burst this shell which holds you in, and you shall shine in the image of Christ, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Yes, you, sinful man, shall be made perfectly holy, even you, now full of iniquity, transgression, and sin. You are a God-provoking rebel this morning, but if you trust in Christ Jesus you shall be washed and made God-pleasing this very day: black as hell to-day, you shall by infinite mercy be made as bright as a seraph before God, and all that because you trust the Saviour. O God, grant us thy saving grace for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah viii., ix. 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 585, 814.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DUTY OF THE PRESENT HOUR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."—Hosea x. 12.

"BREAK up your fallow ground." Our nature at its largest is but a small farm, and we had need to get a harvest out of every acre of it, for our needs are great. Have we left any part of our small allotment uncultivated? If so, it is time to look into the matter and see if we cannot improve this wasteful state of things. What part of our small allotment have we left fallow? We should think very poorly of a farmer who for many years allowed the best and the richest part of his farm to lie altogether neglected and untilled. An occasional fallow has its benefits in the world of nature; but if the proprietor of rich and fruitful land allowed the soil to continue fallow year after year we should judge him to be out of his wits. The wasted acres ought to be taken from him and given to another husbandman who would worthily cherish the generous fields and encourage them to yield their harvests.

Bad is the man who neglects to cultivate his farm, but what shall be said of the sluggard who fails to cultivate himself? If it be wrong to leave untended a part of our estate, how much worse must it be to disregard a portion of ourselves! Now, there is a part of our nature which many allow to lie fallow. It is not often that they neglect the clay soil of their outward frame. They dress that field which is called *the body* with sufficient care; and truly I would not that they should be careless about it, for it is worthy to be kept in due order and culture. Albeit that it is a very secondary part of our nature, yet it is so interwoven with the higher that it is most important that the body should not be neglected. See ye well to that field, and by temperance, cleanliness, and obedience to the rules of health let it be as a garden. Though it be after all but dust and ashes, akin to the common earth around us, yet the body is honourable, and when grace has sanctified the soul the body becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost. Few need to be exhorted to pay attention to their bodies. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is a trinity of questions which the

majority of mankind spend all their lives in answering. The fault is not that they care for the body, but that it takes an undue share of consideration, and usurps a higher place than it can claim.

There is a second field in man's self-farm, and this is called *the mind*, or the soul, and there are many who neglect this. These do ill, for "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." There should be for the mental powers instruction and discipline. We should seek to know, and learn to understand, for we are not as the brutes which perish, which know nothing beyond their daily wants; we have thought and judgment, and memory, and imagination, these all need to be trained and used. Let the mind be cultivated by all means; and yet I need not say much upon this, for "culture" has become a kind of watchword with certain professors of religion, and with supposed knowledge they are puffed up. They have enough thought for the mind, and they glory in the harvests which it yields of human knowledge and earthly learning. The soul in such cases seems to be well tilled, but *the spirit*, the highest nature of all—that with which we speak to God—is suffered to lie entirely fallow! The soil where true religion should flourish in the furrows is left by many to produce the deadly nightshade of superstition, the hemlock of error, or the thistle of doubt. Is it not so with some of you who listen to me at this hour? Your hearts, your innermost natures, have been neglected, and from the finest part of your being the Lord has derived neither rent nor revenue. Your best acres lie fallow—fallow when you have good need to cultivate every inch of the ground.

Do you know what happens to a fallow field? how it becomes caked and baked hard as though it were a brick? All the friable qualities seem to depart, and it hardens as it lies caked and unbroken; I mean, of course, if year succeed year, and the fallow remains untouched. And then the weeds! If a man will not sow wheat, he shall have a crop for all that, for the weeds will spring up, and they will seed themselves, and in due time the multiplication table will be worked out to a very wonderful extent; for these seeds, multiplying a hundred-fold, as evil usually does, will increase, and increase, and increase again till the fallow field shall become a wilderness of thorns and briars, and a thicket of dock, nettle, and thistle. If you do not cultivate your heart, Satan will cultivate it for you. If you bring no crop to God, the devil will be sure to reap a harvest.

I fear that I am speaking to some who have never thought about this. It has not occurred to them to consider themselves, and the reasons for which they have a being. There is one text which I should like to drop into your ear in the hope that it may drop down through your ear right into your heart, "The wicked shall be turned into hell." "Oh," you say, "that is not me." No, I did not mean that for you; I have not finished the verse yet. This is the part for you—"and all the nations that forget God." There are nations of them, so numerous are careless souls. What did they do? They did not do anything; they merely fell into a little matter of neglect: that is all. They forgot something; they forgot God. If I had to tell you how we are to be saved I might take some time about it; but if you ask me how you are to be lost I will tell you in a minute. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Neglect destroys men. Only sit still and allow

matters to take their course and your damnation is sure. If you wish to be ruined in your spiritual husbandry you need not sow thorns, you have only to leave your soul fallow and you will starve when the great harvest comes. Fallow ground in human nature naturally and of itself will work famine and bankruptcy for every man who lets it have its own way. So my text begins right well by saying, "Break up your fallow ground." Begin to look to what you have neglected. Take a survey of what has come already of your neglect. Contemplate what result will surely come of continued carelessness. God helping you, go into that field which is up to your knees with weeds, and look around it, and say, "This must be cleared out. This must be got ready for ploughing. We cannot have this sad waste any longer. We have not gone through this gate before; we have scarcely looked over the hedge; we have left the field entirely to itself, and everything cries out against our neglect. Now, by God's grace, we will enter into it, and will clear all the rubbish away, and pray the eternal God to bring the great steam plough of his almighty grace and tear up the soil to the very bottom, and then to burn these weeds and make this ground fit to be sown, that it may bring forth a harvest to his praise."

Leaving that first part of the text, I am going to dwell upon the second; "It is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

I. First, here is A TIME MENTIONED. When is it time to seek the Lord? I am not going to try to say anything fine, but something that will come home to each unconverted person. May the Holy Spirit help me in this attempt, and bless it to your souls. When is it time to seek the Lord?

Well, it is time *as soon as ever you know right from wrong.* Oh! it will be a thousand blessings to you, dear boy and girl, wherever you may be at this moment, and to you young people that are listening to me, if you are led to seek the Lord while yet you are little. While you are yet children may you become children of God. Before you are permitted to go into open sin may your hearts be opened to divine grace. Some of us who were converted while we were children will have to praise God for ever, not only for our conversion, but for our *early* conversion. I have often prayed, with much sweetness to my own soul, that prayer of David, "O Lord, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." I look forward hopefully to the time when I shall add, "Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." If you have had a man in your employ ever since he was a boy, you do not like to turn him off when he grows old; and our Lord never turns off his old servants. It is a surely prevalent plea with him, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth." It is time to seek the Lord as soon as we can seek anything, for to such seekers there is the special promise, "They that seek me early shall find me." I found the Lord and joined his church when I was fifteen years old, and I feel it no small joy to say with Obadiah, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Early piety saves from much sin and sorrow, and is often followed by a blessed and useful life. My heart rejoices that he, who was himself "the holy child Jesus," suffers the little children to come unto him. Blessed be the name of the Lord

for young people brought to Christ. May it please the Lord to touch each young heart here at this time with this thought, "It is time for me to seek the Lord." Come, ye lads and lasses, ye boys and girls, and learn of Jesus while yet your life is in its dewiest hours.

But it is time especially to seek the Lord *when it is late in the day of life, and the shades of the eternal night are gathering.* If it is time when first the morning breaks, how much more solemnly it is time when the shadows lengthen! You cannot live long, dear friend, for age, I see, is telling upon your once stalwart form. In the order of nature you must soon be gone. You know that you have passed your threescore and ten, perhaps your fourscore years, and you are living now upon the special charity of God. You have run out your lease, and are now a daily tenant. Surely it is time for you to seek the Lord. You may be gone to the judgment and the irreversible sentence before another Sabbath comes round.

"It may be no to-morrow
Shall dawn for you or me;
Why will you run the awful risk
Of all eternity?"

Take heed to yourselves that you do not trifle on the verge of eternity. With one foot in the grave, oh, seek to have both feet on the Rock of Ages! Then you need not fear old age and its infirmities, or its closing hours. Jesus will cheer and comfort you, and your eventide shall only be the prelude of a blessed morning, a morning without clouds. Dear friend, it must be time to seek the Lord when already death seeks you, and infirmity tells upon you. When they that look out of the windows begin to be darkened, it is time to look up to heaven. When the keepers of the house do tremble, it is time to find a home in Jesus. When our grave is ready for us, it is time to be ready for judgment. When there are evident signs of an approaching end, it is time that you should end your ramblings, and seek the Lord.

What a mercy it is that the very wording of the text gives us encouragement! "It is time to seek the Lord,"—then there still is time in which to seek the Lord. Then it is not over with me, even if I have long delayed. I may still come to him. Yes, when you are nothing but a bag of bones, with a crown of grey hair, Christ will have you. When you can only totter on your staff, you may come to Jesus, and if you have grown so infirm that even your memory begins to fail you, and all your senses seem to be departing, yet he can give you a child's eye,—the eye of faith, and a child's heart,—the heart of love, and make you a new man in Christ Jesus. I see a good many here who are aged, and I know many of them are my fathers in Christ: I speak not to them. But I see some who may, perhaps, be still, even though in advanced age, "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Oh! dear old friends, it is surely time that you should seek the Lord. You cannot dispute my plea. Do yield to it at once, and seek the Lord ere yet another grey hair falls to the ground.

There are special occasions in which *a divine call is made to men.* If you remember, we read just now the word of the Lord in which he says, "*It* is in my desire that I should chastise them," and this is said in connection with the words of our text, "It is time to seek the Lord." Now,

have any of you been under the chastising hand of God of late? Have you been sick? Do you come up to this house after a time of illness? Well, it is a choice mercy to be afflicted. Take care that you do not despise it. The Lord has not given you up it seems, for still he thinks it worth his while to put bit and bridle upon you. Waste not the opportunity which recovered health brings you, but hearken to the divine call. He smites you that you may run to him to have the wound bound up. Or is it, dear friends, that you have lost lately some of those who were dear to you? Are they in heaven? Are you not going there yourself? Then, God calls you by that baby that has been removed, by that godly mother or that Christian friend who has gone home. He calls you, and he says, "It is time to seek the Lord." Or have you been losing property? Is trade very bad? Have you been out of work, and are you brought to poverty? Will not these whips touch you, and drive you to seek the Lord? I sometimes think that I have good reason for trusting God, because I have nothing else to trust in. And beyond a question *you* might use the same reason. Go to God, for everything else is going away from you. You will soon have nothing left. O man, make sure of your God! When a Christian is in abundance, he finds God in everything, and when a Christian is in poverty, then he finds everything in God. But you cannot do that; you cannot do that, for God is nothing to you. And where will you be when all is gone, and you have no God? when everything departs from you as "a dream when one awaketh," and you wake up to find that you are "without God and without hope in the world"? Think upon this, I beseech you, and let it be a call from heaven to you. "Hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it"; and, as the strokes fall upon you, and you smart beneath them, think that you hear each stripe say to you, "It is time to seek the Lord."

It will be wise for us to add, and for you to remember, that it is time to seek the Lord *before the chastisement comes.* Is it not a wise thing to escape, if we can, from these judgments, for though kindly meant, it were better if we did not render them necessary? Soul, dost thou want to be whipped to Christ? If God means to save thee he will bring thee by fire, and he will bring thee through water, yea, he will break all thy bones in the bringing, but bring thee he will. Why necessitate the rougher means? "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Why need to be goaded like an ox, or driven with blows like the stubborn mule? Yield thee at once! Yield to softer pressure! Overcome gently, sweetly, by his love, yield thyself to seek the Lord, and begin to do under milder influences what I trust thou wilt be made to do by some means or other. Do you not know how the Lord says concerning his people, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love"? The deed can be done without much ado. As yet you have not lost your children, your trade is not bad, you are not in ill-health, you have every mercy surrounding you; then let these cords of love draw you. Yield while God is beckoning in mercy, and speaking as a lover who woos the object of his choice. Come along with you, just as a little child does when a nurse holds out an apple, or when a mother puts out her hands, and with a smiling face says, "Come to me, my child."

Hear thou the still small voice telling thee that, in the midst of thy prosperity and domestic happiness, it is time to seek the Lord. Oh, if thou shalt have this silver blessing of earthly felicity, and the golden blessing of eternal love on the top of it, how rich thou wilt be! All that thou hast indeed, to this time, may be compared to so many ciphers set in a row. You have seen a child make them on a slate. They all come to nothing. But if thy God come and put his glorious unity in front of them, oh, what riches thou wilt have! Get thy God, the sacred integer, to add real weight and value to all thou hast. It is but nought until he comes there. "It is time to seek the Lord."

Let me argue with any that have been living a life of sin, and have never come to Christ. Have you not had enough of it? May not the time past suffice you? When will you have eaten enough unsavoury meat? What profit have you in it? What comfort has it brought you? What peace has it wrought? Can you live on the profit of it? Could you die with sin about you, and hope that it would make your pillow soft? You know that "the wages of sin is death," and, for my part, I judge the work of sin to be little better than the wages of sin. Do you not think so? And do you not think that you have long enough run risks with your soul, and more than sufficiently played an awful game of hazard with immortality and heaven and hell? O sirs, have you not had enough of the unprofitable works of darkness, and have you not grieved the Spirit long enough? Have you not vexed the heart of Christ long enough? He has been knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking, till his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Must he tarry longer still? Oh, if he means to save you according to his everlasting purpose, he will come into your heart's bedchamber if he wait till cock-crowing; but do not, I pray you, treat contemptuously your loving, tender, patient Lord. Can you make him wait even for another moment? Surely, by the memories of his long-enduring love, it is time that you should seek his face. Here are some sweet words which I would fain put into your mouths:—

"He has called, I cannot tarry,
I have heard his voice before;
I will leave these deadly slumbers,
And set open wide the door.

"In the north blast he rebuked me,
And I knew the message well;
In the south wind now he whispers,
And no longer I'll rebel.

"Even now again I hear him,
Come, my Lord, and enter in,
How can I resist thy knocking?
Come, and cover all my sin."

There are certain occasions in our lives upon which there seems to be a special mark set—a sort of *nota bene*—to make us note well that just now is a happy occasion. Tides to be taken at the flood do happen in men's lives, and it is well if they are turned to profitable use. I think, dear friends, that it is time to seek the Lord very hopefully *when you are in a place where others have sought him and found him.* Your being in

his house of prayer is a token for good. I can bear personal witness hat there is hardly a seat in this Tabernacle on which, at some time or ther, there has not sat a seeking sinner who has found the Saviour. If ve marked these seats with golden stars where souls were saved, you vould see here many footprints of grace, holy places which angels look on with delight. You are found in a place where God is wont to do works of grace: it is a place whose name might be called, "Jehovah Shammah, he Lord is there." In this place the Lord has brought thousands, nany thousands, to the feet of Jesus. And why not you? Why not you? The same gospel is being preached to you, and by the same voice, too, which God has made effectual to others, and with the same lesire that it should be made effectual to you. The preacher can say truly that it is a desire which grows on him and absorbs the whole strength of his soul—the desire that you should be saved. "If by any neans I might save some." The place is hopeful; it is a very Bethesda, a house of mercy, a hospital of healing. Why should you not now seek and find the Saviour?

Perhaps you are feeling in your heart at this moment a measure of thoughtfulness and softening; some drawings are upon you. This shows hat it is time for you to seek the Lord.

"E'en at this hour he calls you!
It is not yet too late;
He has not closed the day of grace,
He has not shut the gate.
He calls you! Hush! He calls you!
He would not have you go
Another step without him,
Because he loves you so."

Do not trifle with your heart when it begins to open. Oh, I have known some that have come to me and said, "We were once tender and hopeful, but now we are like the man in the iron cage; we cannot feel. We are almost past concern and conviction, and nothing arouses us." Beloved hearer, if it is not so with you, you ought to be thankful, but not to rest in your tenderness, nor think that you are any better than others, but bless the mercy which still waits for you, and pleads with you. When sailors go to sea they make use of every breeze. I know they would like a brisk trade-wind to carry them along from day to day; but if no such wind arises they are glad of any favouring breeze. If there is only a puff, or a capful, they catch at it, and tack about to use every breath of it. Now, though you may not at this moment be feeling the secret power of the Holy Spirit to a high degree, yet, if conscience be only a little awakened, do not send it to sleep. If the will be only a little swayed, do not try to stiffen it. If there be only a little desire to seek the Lord, take care of that desire, and let it become a hungering and a thirsting. You know how your servant does when the fire is almost out, how she kneels down and blows the coal, how she puts her hands together and gently breathes the dying flame to life again. If you have a spark, the Lord help you to blow it up; ay, and may his own living breath blow upon that little grace till it becomes the master influence of your nature, and like a consuming fire burns within your soul. These are favourable moments, moments to be used before they fly, when

showers of grace are dropping upon you, and the ground is soft and ready for the holy seed. Take care that you use your opportunity well, for "it is time to seek the Lord."

And so it is, I think, *when the truth comes to you personally*, when you begin to feel, "There is something about the gospel which is meant for me. I believe that God brought me to this Tabernacle to-night, and he has guided the minister in his text, and is helping him to bring the word home to my conscience. I thought he looked at me just now; I feel sure that he means me." Yes, you are quite right; he does mean you; and so does God mean you, and thus he calls you to himself. Arise, he calleth thee! Lame, blind, dead though thou be, he calleth thee! Oh! yield to the sacred summons while now it comes out of the excellent majesty where sits his enthroned Son; for Jesus as well as the Father speaks to thee. Come! Come at once! Come, thou lingering, fainting one! Come, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, for he will give you rest. "It is time to seek the Lord."

We have spoken enough about the time, if the Holy Spirit will but apply the warnings which we have uttered.

II. Let us now, in the second place, enlarge upon the peculiar work to which we are called at this time. Here is A SEARCH COMMENDED. "It is time *to seek the Lord*."

"Seek the Lord"? Why, he is here! "Seek the Lord"? He is everywhere present! "Seek the Lord"? He needs no seeking, for in him we live and move. Yes, but do you not see that it does not refer so much to where *God* is, as to where *you* are? You have turned your back on him, dear friend. If you are the person that I mean to-night, you have been forgetting him; and so, because he has not been in your thoughts, you have, in a moral and spiritual sense, lost the Lord. He is everywhere except in your thoughts, and he is not to be sought for as though he were some hidden thing, to be discovered by search or ingenuity; but he is to be sought after because, as far as you are concerned, you have so forgotten him as to have lost sight of him. "Seek ye the Lord." I hear the earnest enquirer say, "It must mean that I am now to endeavour to realize that there is a God?" "And that he is very near me?" Yes. "And that I am speaking to him?" Yes. "And that he calls to me, and says, 'come to me; be reconciled'?" Yes. All this, and more, is to be your finding of God as really existent to you. Begin now to live, not as an atheist who is without God, but as a Christian, who has God with him and has God within him. "Seek the Lord" means, then, that thought, and love, and desire should all come towards God, and realize him, and so seek him.

"Seek the Lord?" says one; "but I am sinful. If I come into his presence he will slay me, for he cannot look upon iniquity." Then thou must come and seek the Lord in the way in which it will be good for thee to come near to him, namely, through his dear Son. Because as a sinner thou couldst not come to him, or he to thee, he has been pleased that his dear Son should take upon himself the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and "bear our sins in his own body on the tree." Now, if thou wilt come to Christ, God is in Christ, and thou wilt thus come to God. We may not come to God without preparation, but we may come to Christ without any preparation.

'e may come just as we are, at once, in all our dishabille, in all ır nakedness, in all our filthiness. We shall never find God till we ek him by the way of Jesus Christ. My sinning brother, since the ord has not hidden himself in Christ, but has revealed himself in hrist, and bids thee see him in his Son, I do entreat thee, attend to ıis word of the text, "It is time to seek the Lord." Come and seek m now by asking him to wash thee from thy sin that thou mayest ıd him, to change thy whole nature that thou mayst find him, to make ıee like himself that thou mayest dwell with him, to help thee to serve m that thou mayest live in the light of his countenance, to help thee ı cast off every false way, and to abound in his grace, that the rain of s righteousness may come upon thee, and saturate thy soul, so that ıou canst never lose his presence again. "It is time to seek the Lord."

My dear hearers, if any of you are not accustomed to hear the gospel, ıt have been brought up in various forms of will-worship, let me be- ech you not to think that it is of any use to seek a priest, or to seek a crament, or to seek anything but *the Lord.* To God himself in Jesus hrist you must personally come; and the text says not, "It is time to be ınfirmed," or "It is time to be baptized," or "It is time to come to holy ımmunion;" but it says, "It is time to seek the Lord." That is the th and core and marrow of your necessity, that your soul must seek ter God, and your heart must come into the arms of God, as the pro- gal son came into the arms of his father. He said, "I will arise, and go ıto my—*priest*"? No, prodigal as he was, he was not so much a dupe. e said, "I will arise, and go unto my *father*." There was wisdom in ıing at once to head quarters, and seeking pardon from one who had ıe power to give it. The prodigal had fed swine, but he had not become ıe of the swine himself, or he might have gone to a father-confessor or priest: being still a man, and having come to himself, he sought his ther. O soul, I beseech thee, seek to no minister; seek to no outward rm or ceremony, for in the Lord alone is thy salvation. Every remedy ıort of divine aid will mock thy misery. Time enough hast thou sought ı earthly physicians, and thou art nothing better; go then to Jehovah ophi, the Lord that healeth thee, and thou shalt be made whole.

Thou wilt never be cured of thine inward malady by sacraments, though ıou shouldst devour a mountain of sacred bread and drink an Atlantic consecrated wine. Thou wilt still be as lost as ever, though all saints ıd angels should come to thy rescue, unless thou dost seek to God— God in Christ Jesus. "It is time to seek the Lord."

III. I close with a third point, upon which I will be very brief: there A PERIOD SET. How long are we to seek the Lord? "It is time to ek the Lord, *till he rain righteousness upon you.*"

I believe that very much seeking of the Lord is based on ignorance, at there are some who really set about seeking the Lord as if they ıld not find him, and as if he were a long way off. This is corrected r the apostle in those memorable words, "Say not in thy heart, Who all ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the depths? The ›rd is nigh thee." How nigh thee? "*In thy mouth.*" That is how gh it is. "In thy mouth." What hinders a man's receiving that which in his mouth? Swallow it, man. Swallow! That is all thou hast do. It is in thy mouth: nothing can be nearer, surely, than to have it

in thy mouth. Oh! if I were dying, and I had a live-long lozenge in my mouth, and I knew that it would save my life, do you think I would not suck it down? Ah! would I rest until it was down? I should not care if a critic stood by and said, "You must not eat that lozenge. You are not worthy of it." I have got it in my mouth, and your remonstrance comes too late, it is gliding down my throat. "Oh! but you must not swallow that lozenge: you are not fit to receive it." I have got it, and I defy anyone to rob me of it, for down it goes. "But you must not, really, partake of it; it may not be meant for you. Perhaps you are not in the election of grace." In vain your supposition. I have got it in my mouth, and if possession is nine points of the law it is all the points of the gospel. I take it into my inward parts, and I will never part with it. That is just the gospel, and a sweet way of putting it,—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." You have it again in our Lord's words in his commission to his disciples, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

But, about this seeking. You see that there are some that forget that it is so very near them, and they go seeking; but, if thou seek the Lord, soul, whatever of ignorance mingles with the search, I exhort thee to persevere in seeking the Lord *till he rain righteousness upon thee*. Seek you the Lord, my dear hearer, till you find him; never be satisfied with means; rest not till you get the end, find the Lord, or else go on seeking. Oh! stay not at heaven's gate; ask for an abundant entrance. Be not content with knocking, but knock louder and yet louder, till the gate be opened. It is well to be near the kingdom, but it is an awful thing to be so near it and yet not to be in it. It is well to be persuaded to be a Christian, but a dreadful thing to be almost persuaded and then to stop in an undecided condition.

"Well," sayest thou, "but I may, perhaps, wait long; I have waited long already, and I am weary." Suppose it to be so, is it not worth waiting for? But I tell thee, thy waiting is very much through thine own ignorance. As I have already said, the word is nigh thee, and thou mayest have it to-night; even now thou mayest have it, for it is in thy mouth. If those poor blind eyes are delivered from the scales that hide a present Saviour, e'en now, at this moment, thou mayest give that look of which we sing:—

> "There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
> There is life at this moment for thee;
> Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
> Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

Yet, if thou dost not understand it, cease not to seek that light may come. Pardon will pay thee abundantly when it comes. Thou sayest, "I have been pleading for months." Then, do not waste all that thou hast done, I pray thee. Come and close with Christ, and get now the answer to all those prayers. Think of Columbus, within three days of America, that wondrous land in which he believed. He saw few signs of it—here and there a bit of seaweed—some little tokens that there might be land

ahead; and the mariners declared that they would sail no farther upon that mysterious sea. Suppose that, within three days of the shore, Columbus had turned back; then had he lost all his pains for lack of a few hours perseverance. And thou, to-night, perhaps, within half-an-hour of joy unspeakable—thou, within the next ten minutes able to rejoice in Christ and find present salvation—wilt thou now start back? No, by the Eternal Godhead, push thou on! O Spirit of the living God, push the sinner on, and lead him now to say, "If I perish, I will perish pleading for mercy, and hoping in the grace of God by Jesus Christ." Thou canst not and thou shalt not perish so.

"It is time to seek the Lord, till he rain righteousness upon you." That is how long you have to seek him. I will give you a picture, and with that conclude. You know the story of Elijah when the heavens had long been deaf, a brazen concave that mocked the desires of men. He went up to the top of Carmel, and he began to pray. With groans and cries and tears, with his head between his knees, he used language which God only heard, but it was mighty pleading. Then he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea;" and Gehazi went up, and looked toward the sea: he gazed down there along the sea-line, and up there above the Lebanon; and then he cast a wistful look around, and came back, and said, "There is nothing." The prophet, while his servant had gone, had been crying more importunately. He had been pouring out his soul to its very depths before God, saying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless this thirsty land." A second time he said to Gehazi, "Go again!" I think I see Gehazi going and looking: but he perceives nothing. "Master," he said, "there is nothing." But the prophet had been praying still, and so he said, "Go," a third time; and away went Gehazi, thinking it was a fool's errand. He went and looked, and in a moment said, "There is nothing. I told you there was nothing." But the prophet had still been praying while the servant went, and he said to Gehazi, "Go again" for the fourth time. "He felt as the Lord liveth he must hear my prayer," and he gave himself again to wrestling with his Lord. Before the living God he knelt, and he felt that he could not rise until the promise and the covenant had been fulfilled. Here comes Gehazi back. He does not like his task at all. "Master," he says, "I have been five times and there is nothing. Will you send me again?" "Go again, Gehazi; go again," said Elijah. "Go again." And Gehazi goes the sixth time. "Alas!" he says to himself, "I never went on such an idle set of errands before." All along the Mediterranean Sea he looks, and looks, and looks again; and back he comes with the old tale, "There is nothing; there is nothing; there is nothing." But what says Elijah to him? "This last time whilst thou hast been gone, I have prevailed. I have believed that I have the petition which I asked, and I know I have it. Go, Gehazi, go and look. I said to thee, go again seven times; so go and look again." The weary servant is in no hurry to go. The longer he is about it, the more likelihood there will be of its coming to something. When he reaches Carmel's top, and casts his eye over the sky, there is a little fleece of cloud, but it is such a tiny flake that it is not bigger than a man's hand. What is that to the sky? What rain can come out of a morsel of cloud to be measured by a span? He comes back and he declares, "Behold, there

ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Up rises the prophet, and wraps his mantle about him. The rain is coming, and he sends Gehazi in haste down to Ahab, to warn him against the nearing deluge, saying, "Prepare thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." Nobody could hear it, but Elijah had marvellous ears as he had a marvellous voice with God. He runs before Ahab's chariot in sacred exhilaration of delight. The heavens are already beginning to turn to blackness, and the first big drops are falling. Elijah has prevailed. Now, get you to your chambers to-night—you that have not found the Lord; and come not forth till you have found him, and he has given you grace as a mighty shower. If, by the morning light, there be but a little hope, and though you can only say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," keep the watches and continue the prayer. O soul, though thou canst only cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," yet watch on, and seek on, for the Lord will rain righteousness upon you. A deluge of mercy shall descend, and your heart shall rejoice, for this is his own promise, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." So be it unto you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1030, 520, 449.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1*s.*; *cloth, gilt edges*, 2*s.*

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"The popular pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle here puts forward some quaint and telling little addresses founded on sundry pithy sayings, the meaning of which he very effectually illustrates and amplifies. The bright, genial fashion in which the various points are dealt with will certainly render this book welcome wherever it goes, and as it is pretty sure to have a wide circulation, that is saying a good deal."—*City Press.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DESIRES TOWARDS GOD: A SERMON FOR THE WEAK.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee."—Psalm xxxviii. 9.

IT is our earnest desire that all who are in Christ may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. I could earnestly wish to see such spiritual life among us that every man had reached the very height of holy manhood, and was in possession of the utmost possible degree of spiritual vigour. It is a great calamity when there is a very large proportion of sick folk in any Christian community, for these must draw off the care and strength of the church from aggressive movements. How favoured should we be if it could be said of us as of Israel when they came out of Egypt, "There was not one feeble person in all their tribes." Oh that the day would come when the word shall be fulfilled which saith: "He that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

Let no man suppose that there is a necessity that he should always be weak in faith, always walk under a cloud, or that he should for ever be a Mr. Feeble-mind or Mr. Ready-to-Halt. Miracles of grace are for saints as well as sinners; feeble minds can be strengthened and crutches thrown away. We ought to grow out of the feebleness of our spiritual childhood. We should cry to God for grace that we may get up "into the hill country" of holy confidence, and there, like Mary, sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Oh that we might all attain to assurance, yea, to the full assurance of understanding, so that we should know why and wherefore we are thus assured, and so become rooted, grounded, and settled in the faith, for then nothing would by any means remove us from the truth, or even move us in the truth. May the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. I would to God that you might each realise that promise of the twenty-fifth Psalm, "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth."

At the same time, we are most painfully conscious that all God's people are not in a vigorous condition, and we know that there is a large mixture in every church of those who are sickly, desponding, and faint. These we are bound to care for; common humanity demands it, our sacred office binds us to it, and the example of the good Shepherd constrains us. We must feed the lambs. We must "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees." The voice of God is heard in our heart saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," which voice we dare not disregard; indeed, the sympathies aroused within us by a similar experience prompt us to be forward in compassionating the weak and the tried. Therefore, at this time I would seek out the weary and wounded and feeble; not with a view of trying to multiply their number, but with the hope of diminishing their number by cheering them till they grow out of their low condition.

We would not pamper weakness till we seem to offer a premium to unbelief; but yet we would feed the feeble in the king's meadows till they become strong in the Lord. I shall now look after those who cannot get beyond desires and groans, and let none blame me for this service. If the shepherd spends much of his time among the weakly sheep, if he gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom, if he seems even to neglect the stronger sheep because they do not so urgently call for his care, no one will hence infer that he delights in feebleness. Far from it; he is trying to remove it by his tenderness. You do not blame the humane for caring for the sick. If great efforts are put forth to build or endow a hospital, you do not say, "Sickness is a desirable thing, for all this money is spent upon comforting and helping those who feel it." Your feelings are quite the contrary: though these sick folk become the object of care, it is not as a reward to them, but as an act of compassion towards them. Let none, therefore, say that the preacher encourages a low state of grace: he encourages it no more than the physician encourages disease when he tries by his care and skill to heal the sick. Whatever your judgments may be, I mean always to look after the downcast and the struggling, nor shall the babes be forgotten of my soul while I am able to be a nursing father to them. In a large family where there are little children there must always be arrangements for their feeding; spoon victuals and milk must always be in the house, for if the cupboard contained nothing but joints and biscuits the tender ones would starve. If it should ever come to pass that a ministry consisted entirely of the higher doctrines and the deeper experiences it would leave many unsupplied, and it certainly would not be like the ministry of Christ, which had in it as much of simplicity as of mystery. A true steward cares for all the household, and provides milk for babes as well as meat for men. If he forgets anything, he had better forget the meat than the milk; for though babes could not live on strong meat, men can live upon pure milk. Truth to tell, I have known the strong men come into such a condition at times that the milk for babes was all that they could take. Burly Samsons who can carry Gaza's gates may yet be so reduced that they can digest nothing but milk diet. Those whose confidence is at its very height to-day may be brought so low that they will prize beyond gold the smallest marks and evidences of grace, and will be delighted to take hold upon those

elementary truths which belong to new-born believers. Even fathers in Christ are glad at times to seize upon those simple promises which aforetime they left to the most trembling of the saints, or perhaps to desponding sinners. If therefore at this present I speak to the very lowest form of Christian life, if I try to meet the weakest case, I shall not admit that I am neglecting the strong. My giant brother over yonder can have a drink of milk if he likes; it will not hurt him. Come and try it, my worthy friend. Receive again the simple doctrine by which little children live, and you will find wholesome fare. Delight yourself by all means in such grand old doctrine as we were singing just now in Toplady's noble hymn, but do not disdain the plain truths which must ever remain the staple food of the household of faith.

Come we, then, to the text, "All my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." May the Holy Spirit be our instructor, and we shall learn aright.

I. Our first point is DESIRES TOWARDS GOD SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO HIM. You, it may be, my dear friend, cannot see any grace in yourself at all; all that you do perceive is a desire to have grace. You know that you desire to repent of sin, desire to be delivered from it, desire to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, desire to be perfectly reconciled to God, but you fear that you have come no further. Now, it is true that many desires are of no avail whatever. "The sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Mere wishes are sorry things. But the desires of our text are earnest desires, the movements of the heart, for they are accompanied by "groaning." The psalm evidently speaks of desires after God, not after temporal things; desires which are mainly expressed in the first verse of the psalm: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." It is of intense, earnest, agonising desires toward God for spiritual things that I am about to speak. Such desires ought to be made known unto God.

It may be said that God knows our desires, and that this is what the text itself asserts. I do not doubt the omniscience of God; but he bids us confess everything to him quite as carefully as if he did not know it until we informed him. We are to tell out our cases for ourselves just as David did, for it was not until after he had told out his sad story in the eight previous verses that he said, "All my desire is before thee." We may expect the Lord to treat us as if he did not know our desires if we are negligent in declaring them. Does not the apostle say, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"? Mark the language: "Let them be made known." The Lord waits to be gracious, but he tarries till his people have pleaded for the blessing: he knows, but frequently he does not act upon the knowledge till we have laid bare our case before him.

Make known, then, your requests; and do so, first, because *our whole life ought to be transparent before God.* What is the use of endeavouring to hide anything? "All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The life of every man should be unveiled before the eye of heaven; but as to those who are believers in Christ, even in the humblest degree, they desire no concealment; rather do they cry, "Search me, O God." We do not wish to hide anything; our hope lies in our heavenly Father's knowing all. There should be no wish to

smuggle up even a stray desire, or to conceal the most doleful groan: all should be open and above-board between a sinner and his Saviour. What secrets can there be between a soul convinced of sin and a pardoning God? It would have an ill look if we still sewed fig leaves together, or hid among the trees of the garden. No, let us stand forth, and let our covering be such only as the Lord himself provides. Take care, then, in prayer to set forth the secrets of your soul before God. Tell him your sin, and spread it out in all its sorrowful detail. Tell him your fears for the past, your anxieties for the present, and your dreads for the future; tell him your suspicions of yourself, and your trembling lest you should be deceived. Tell him what salvation you wish for, and what work of grace it is that your soul desireth: make all your heart known unto God, and keep back nothing, for much benefit will come to you from being honest with your best Friend.

Do this next, because *it is commanded of God that we should make our desires known to him.* Prayer, which is a constant duty and privilege, is practically "desire." It is desire with its garments on; desire booted and saddled for travelling the heavenly road. Prayer without desire is dead; its soul has fled, it is but the carcase of prayer. When desire is burning in the soul it sends up the flame of prayer, or the sparks of sighs and groans. Prayer is the fiery chariot, and desires are its horses of fire. Since, then, we are commanded to "pray without ceasing," we are really commanded to make known our desires continually. Give utterance to your desire in the best form you can, however difficult may be the task. I pray you do this, for God would have you confess all to him. He says that "men ought always to pray and not to faint": and again, "in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." Jesus said, "Watch and pray," and his apostle said, "I will that men pray everywhere." And what is this but to make your desires known to God?

It is a great benefit to a man to be able to express his desires, and this is an argument for making them known to God. You know your own desires better by trying to express them; they are indistinct till prayer sketches their likeness and fixes their image. Even should you fail to express your desires, their inexpressible character will better make known to you their greatness and their intensity. Sometimes a desire that is in the heart would at once be extinguished if you were to attempt to express it, for you would not dare to allow it to exist after you once saw its true nature. A glance at some desires would seal their doom, for we should feel them to be unworthy to be presented before the Lord. But when it is a holy and pure desire, tell it, for it will relieve your heart, it will heighten your estimate of the blessing sought, it will bring you to think over the promises made to such desires, it will thereby strengthen your hope that your desire will be fulfilled, and enable you by faith to obtain it. The prayerful expression of one desire will often quicken further desires, and make a thousand of them where there was but one. If you will make known your desire before your God it will gather strength, and soon obtain fulfilment. Desire should not be like a bird, shut in within the ark; it should be sent out as Noah sent forth his dove. There! let it fly towards heaven; it will come home, bearing the olive-leaf in its mouth. The return of prayer brings peace. Therefore send it on its profitable

errand, and never attempt to hold it in the cage of silence. Though it hath lien among the pots and is begrimed with groans, let it mount towards heaven, and soon its wings will be covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold. By prayer shoot out the arrows of desire from the quiver of your heart, for every one of them shall smite your enemies.

Perhaps you feel that you cannot pray because you are under so dense a gloom, but then is the time to double your desires and your pleadings. I am told that the flower, of which the ancients used to say so much, because it always turns toward the sun, is said to follow the great lord of day just as much in cloudy weather as when his bright beams gladden all things. What though the sun is not visible, yet he is still in his sphere, and the nature of the flower seems to tell it in what direction to turn. Be it ever so with our soul in gloomy hours. When we cannot see the Lord's face may we still look towards him with strong desire. O soul, pray even when God does not appear to hear. When thine eye is blinded with tears, turn thy mournful face towards the mercy-seat, and look towards his holy hill. Remember where he was wont to manifest himself to thee. If he meet thee not to-day at Zion's gates, yet remember him from the Hermonites and the hill Mizar, where aforetime he revealed himself to thee; and let thy desires follow hard after him until thou find him yet again. Let nothing stop thee from desiring and pouring out thy complaint, for herein is the way of health to thy soul.

A gracious expression of desire before God will often be to you a proof that those desires are right. A desire that you dare tell to God is sure to be of a godly sort. If I can say, "O Lord, all my desire is before thee, and I wish it to be before thee: I court thine inspection because I hope thou wilt fulfil the desire," then my wish is such as conscience approves, and is right and good. Is there not comfort in this for those of you who think you have nothing more than desires. If you have desires which you wish the Lord to know of they must be right; you would not dare to bring them before God if they were not good desires? When you are in God's house and with God's people, or reading God's word, or when you are drawing near to God in contemplation, then these desires are strongest; now, if they were bad desires they would not flourish in the best of atmospheres, they would not be watered and nourished by the best of influences, for such influences would tend to kill ill weeds of strange desire. So, then, there is some good thing in thee towards the Lord God of Israel after all: thou wouldst not have these heavings of soul, these strivings of heart, these pantings, these hungerings and thirstings, if it were not that there is somewhat in thee of the Spirit's working. God has dealt graciously with thee in giving thee these good desires. Sparks of everlasting life are alive within thy spirit so long as thou hast spiritual hunger and thirst. Thy desire must be a good thing, or thou wouldst not dare to make it known to God; and seeing that it is a good thing, take care thou nurture it well, and cause it to grow by expressing it with thy whole heart before God.

II. This leads up to my second head, which is this: DESIRES TOWARDS GOD ARE GRACIOUS THINGS. Intense groaning desires towards God are in themselves works of grace.

For certainly, first, *they are associated with other graces.* When a man can say, "All my desire is toward God, and my heart groans after

him, and yet I find little in myself but these desires," I think we can point him to some other good things which are in his heart. Surely humility is apparent enough. Thou takest a right view of thyself, O man of desires! A lowly esteem hast thou of thyself, and this is well. I would to God that some who are full of brags and boasts about their holiness could only be as safe as thou art with thy desires and groans, for there is in thee that broken and contrite heart which the Lord will not despise. God hath given thee this jewel among the rest—a meek and lowly spirit. Ay, and there is faith in thee, for no man heartily desires to believe unless he doth in some measure already believe. There is a measure of believing in every true desire after believing. If thou sayest, "I would trust Christ," why, soul, thou trustest him already in some degree, since thou dost believe that he is the kind of person whom it would be right to trust. Thy desire to cast thyself wholly upon Christ hath in it the beginnings of saving faith. Thou hast the grain of mustard seed within thee which will grow into a great tree. I can tell the mustard by its taste: the strength of thy desire, its pungency and heat, betray the genuine seed. And thou hast love, too; I am sure of it. Did ever a man desire to love that which he did not love already? Thou hast already some affection toward the Lord Jesus, some drawings of thy heart Christwards, or else thou wouldst not sigh and cry to be more filled with it. He who loves most is the very man who most passionately desires to love more. Love and desire keep pace in Christians, so that the more love the more desire to love; and so I gather that this desire of thine to love Jesus is a sure evidence that thou dost love him already. Thy desire is the smoke which proves that there is fire in thy soul. A living flame lingers yet among the embers, and with a little fanning it will reveal itself. Thy desire to serve God is obedience, thy desire to pray is prayer, thy desire to praise is praise. I am sure, also, that thou hast some hope; for a man does not continue to groan out before his God, and to make his desire known, unless he has some hope that his desire will be satisfied, and that his grief will be assuaged. David lets out the secret of his own hope, for he says in the fifteenth verse, "In thee, O Lord, do I hope." You, my downcast brother, do not hope anywhere else, do you? You know that every other door is shut, every other road is blocked up except that which leads from your soul to God. I know you have some hope, and therefore if you have no hope anywhere else I am persuaded that you have a hope in God. That thought of God which makes you cry, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him," has the seeds of hope, and the beginning of comfort, within it. I might go over many of the graces, but these will suffice: as a man is known by his company, so may our desires be known by their attendants; and as holy desires after God keep company with humility, and faith, and love, and hope, I am persuaded they are of like character, and are gracious themselves.

Another proof that they are gracious is that *they come from God.* Desires after God must come from some source or other. If you desire to be holy, where did that desire come from? From your own corrupt nature? Impossible. Certain believers in free will may think so, but we are not agreed with them. We believe that none can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean, neither can thorns bring forth figs. If there is

a desiring and a groaning of the heart after God in your bosom depend upon it human nature never originated it. Can sin desire holiness, or death pant for life? Holy desires are plants which are by no means native to the soil of human nature: their seed comes from a far country. Did the devil work these holy desires, think you? Hearken, brother, does the devil make you thirst after God? Does he make you sigh and cry after the light of your Father's countenance? Does he make you pray to be delivered from temptation? Does he make you sigh to be conformed to the image of Christ? Then the devil has very greatly altered since I met him last, and since he was described in holy writ, or seen in the conflicts of good men. Who, then, has kindled these heavenly flames of desire? I earnestly avow my belief that every pure desire is as much the work of God as the grace which it desires. He who sincerely longs to be right with God has already somewhat of a work of divine grace within his soul creating those aspirations. Now, as God can say of all that he creates, "It is very good," I come to the conclusion that these groaning desires after God are very good. They are not great, nor strong, but they are gracious. There is water in a drop as well as in the sea, there is life in a gnat as well as in an elephant, there is light in a beam as well as in the sun, and so is there grace in a desire as truly as in complete sanctification.

Thirdly, *holy desires are a great test of character:* a test of eminent value. You enquire, "Can you judge a man's character by his desires?" I answer, yes. I will give you the other side of the question that you may see our own side all the more clearly. You may certainly judge a bad man by his desires. Here is a man who desires to be a thief. Well, he is a thief in heart and spirit. Who would trust him in his house now that he knows that he groans to rob and steal? Here is a man who desires to be an adulterer—is he not in God's sight already such? Did not Jesus tell us so? Here is a man who desires to be a Sabbath-breaker, but he is compelled by his situation to attend the house of God: he is really in God's sight a Sabbath-breaker, because he would follow his own works on God's holy day if he had the opportunity. The desire to commit a fraud, and especially the earnest desire to do it, would prove a man to be a villain at heart. If a man were to say, "I want to cut my enemy's throat, I am full of revenge, I am groaning to murder him," is he not a murderer already before God? Let us, then, measure out justice in our own case by the rule which we allow towards others. Let me help you to apply the principle. If you have a desire, an earnest, agonising desire towards that which is right, even though through the infirmity of the flesh and the corruption of your nature you do not reach to the height of your desire, yet that desire is a test of your character. The main set of the current determines its direction: the main bent of the desire is the test of the life. It is well with you even though you have to cry with Paul, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would I find not." If you earnestly desire to love God you do love him. If you desire to be purified, if with a strong, continual, agonising desire you pine for it, already the work of purification has begun, for your desire has been purified, your wish, your will, your heart have been purified already. Is there not proof enough that there is a measure of graciousness about true desires after God?

Note, further, that *our desires are a test very much superior to several other favourite modes of self-judging.* For instance, many people judge their religion by the regularity of their attention to its outward duties. "I was never absent on a Sunday morning, nor even from an evening service. I attend the communion at least once a month, I go to the prayer-meetings, I read a chapter or half a chapter every day, I bow my knees at my bedside every morning and evening: I have never omitted any part of my duty for years past." I am very glad to hear it, respected friend; but if you have no desires towards God, all your regularity of attendance does but liken you to the church clock, which is quite as punctual, or to the pulpit Bible, which never leaves its place. You may be a capital Pharisee, but you are not a true Christian unless your soul is full of living desires. If you cry out, "I am thirsting for God, the living God. My spirit groans after holiness. When I have bowed my knee, I groan before God because I cannot live as I would, or even pray as I desire to pray. I have come to the house of God longing to be fed with spiritual meat. I have always been a hungry soul towards divine things": then I quote my Master's words, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Living desires are better than dead duties, as a living dog is better than a dead lion. The most regular outward performance of pious duties may be the revolution of heartless machinery; but desires mean life, and life is needful if we would please the living God.

Desires are a better test than the self-congratulation I have sometimes met with about the possession of gracious things: I say not, better than the possession of graces, but better than the supposed possession of them. Did you say, "I have faith, I can move mountains"? I had sooner hear you say, "Lord, increase our faith." Did you boast, "I have love, so that I shall never backslide or deny Christ"? I had rather thou shouldst say "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." Do you say, "I have experience, and shall never be misled. I can hear heresy and be none the worse"! Ah, yes, I have heard that kind of talk, but I feel safer about a man who says, "Preserve me, O Lord, for in thee do I put my trust." Remember that the chief of the apostles said: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We feel surer as to the grace in a man's heart who groans after more grace, than we do of him who boasts,—"I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing." A man may be full and dead; but he who hungers is alive. Brother, if your soul is desiring, and crying, and groaning after God, do not condemn yourself because you cannot speak quite so positively as others as to your safety or your sanctity: desire on, and groan on; but at the same time get nearer to the cross, trust more completely, look out of self, and rest more fully in the covenant promises of God. Your state is not one to cause trouble; it is painful but it is not perilous.

I am sure that there is a graciousness about holy desires, because *they have been very prominent in the very best of men.* Look at David! See how his soul longs, yea even faints! Hear how he pants, like a hart for the water-brook, that he may draw near to God! His Psalms are

very largely made up of desires: they abound with such passages as "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after"; "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"; "My soul thirsteth for God." All his desires went heavenward, for he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" and in his last hours he exclaimed concerning the covenant of grace, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." Nor must we forget Daniel. In the passage in which Daniel is spoken of as a "man greatly beloved," which is a very sweet translation, the words may be read, "a man of desires." I suppose that he obtained that name of the Lord because he much abounded in holy longings, and was accustomed to rise from one desire to another. There is a remarkable expression in the second of Daniel at the eighteenth verse: when the king had dreamed and none could interpret the dream: "Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret." In other books we should have found it stated that he asked his friends to pray, but Daniel went to the very soul of things, and begged them to desire. His prayers thrice a day were not formal; they were deeply and intensely sincere, and hence they were full of desire, which is the motive force, the life-blood of prayer. Daniel, then, was a man of great desires, and hence a desirable man with God: a man greatly beloved. As for Nehemiah, that faithful servant of God, he began his work by praying for a blessing on those who "desired" to fear God's name. If you turn to the New Testament what a man of desires Paul was; he was always desiring this and desiring that for other people, until he desired for himself that he might depart and be with Christ. A part of the inheritance of Israel of old lay on this side Jordan, but the major portion was on the further shore; and so the major part of a believer's portion for the present lieth in desires for things not yet attained. A man of devotion is always a man of desires. Among your acquaintances you will find the best people are fullest of longings to be better. They know that God has blessed them, they rejoice in every particle of grace they have ever received from him, but they are always wanting more. They are in spiritual things as hard to satisfy as the king whom Du Chaillu met with in the centre of Africa. He gave him a huge present of goods, and his gracious majesty was overjoyed and held a great feast over the treasure; but before the week was over his black kingship said to Du Chaillu, "Truly, goods and money are like hunger; you are filled to-day, but to-morrow you are hungry again." In one sense he who has obtained grace never hungers, that is to say, he needs nothing beyond his God; but in another sense he always hungers more and more the more he obtains. Covetousness of goods is a crime, but covetousness of good is a virtue. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." He who has little grace can be content with little, he that hath more grace longs for more, and he who hath most is insatiable to a still larger degree. He hath the greatest esteem for the heavenly treasure who hath had the most acquaintance with it, and, therefore, he longeth to possess all that can be possessed. Time warns me to leave this point, only repeating the fact that desires towards God are gracious things.

III. Thirdly, DESIRES TOWARD GOD ARE CAREFULLY OBSERVED BY HIM. Was not that the first head? No, it was not; the first head was

that we ought to make our desires known to God; the third head is that they are known. It is wonderful condescension that the Lord should observe so poor a creature as a sinful, mournful mortal. You heard me read the whole psalm just now; is it not a terrible description of a horrible sickness? I wonder how many of you would like to go and visit a man who was in the condition which David pictures, and watch over him, and nurse him? Here was a man who had no soundness in his flesh, and no rest in his bones, but was eaten up with a loathsome disease, and covered with wounds which corrupted till they stank. The Lord cannot look upon iniquity, he hates and loathes it infinitely, and yet he looks upon his poor servant when sin has wrought in him all this mischief. Oh, poor, broken down believer, thy God still looks upon thee! Oh thou whose wounds gangrene, thou who seemest already to be rotting into the sepulchre of apostasy, still if there be any life and desire in thee, thy God is watching thee; with tender, loving eye he sees thee in thy misery and filthiness.

The best thought of all is that he sees the good points in us: for, while David does not say, "Lord, all my wounds are before thee; Lord, all this stench and corruption are before thee," he does say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee." God has a quick eye to spy out anything that is good in his people; if there is but one speck of soundness, if there is a single mark of grace, if there is any remaining token of spiritual life, though it be only a faint desire, though it be only a dolorous groan, the Father sees it, and records it, casting the evil behind his back, and refusing to behold it.

Oh, is it not a blessed matter of fact that my desire is before God? Even when I cannot speak it out it is all before him. I cannot explain it, but it is known to him. It puzzles me to put my case, but it will not puzzle him to solve it, and to deal with it, and to deliver me out of the evil of it. "All my desire is before thee," as if he had just said, "There it is, Lord," I have not kept back anything. As far as I know I have put it all in thy view; but, inasmuch as I do not know it all, I cannot express it all, but this is still my comfort, that thine eye misses no point, thy heart leaves nothing unperceived; thou knowest all about me, and thou wilt deal wisely with me.

IV. The last head is that EARNEST DESIRES TOWARDS GOD WILL BE FULFILLED. How do we know this? If men are sighing and crying to God they will be heard,—how know we that?

Why, first, because *these desires are of God's creation*, and you cannot imagine, at least I hope you cannot imagine, that God would create desires in us which he will not satisfy. Why, look even in nature, if he gives the beast hunger and thirst he provides for it the grass upon the mountains and the streams that flow among the valleys. There is not a fish in the sea nor an insect in the air but what God has made provision for gratifying its instincts and its desires. If, then, he himself has put in you a desire after himself he will give you himself. If he has made you long after pardon, he will give you pardon. If he has made you sigh after purity, after eternal salvation, he means to give you these. Do you think that God would act towards us wantonly, and torment us with the torments of Tantalus needlessly? Has he made his mercy flow

all around you, and has he given you thirst, and will he never let you drink? If he did not mean that you should drink, why has he created the longing within you? You do not thirst after God by nature, and if he had let you alone you never would have so thirsted. You did not pine after his love until he made you pine for it; why, then, this creation of a wish if it be not gratified? Has he made you long after faith, and yet, think you, will he deny it to you? Has he given you a groaning after his dear Son Jesus Christ, and will not Jesus yet be yours? Soul, he is yours. I have seen some treat children very unkindly when to make sport for themselves they have exhibited fruit or toys to the children which have excited great desire, and they have acted as if they were going to give them to the children, and then they have gone away and given them nothing, and laughed at them. They thought there was wit in such conduct, but it seemed to me meanness itself. God hath no such cruel ways with men; if he has taught them to desire his grace he will fulfil their desire, because he is ever a merciful and gracious God.

Remember, O desiring man, that *already you have a blessing.* When our divine Master was on the mountain side the benedictions which he pronounced were no word blessings, but they were full of weight and meaning, and among the rest of them is this—"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Blessed while they hunger, blessed while they thirst. Yes, they are already blessed, and there is this at the back of it, "for they shall be filled." Thank God that you hunger. Oh, my friends, if we could make this city of London to be full of souls that hungered after Christ we might pray day and night for so blessed a consummation. If we could cause the multitudes of men who go up and down these streets, careless of God and of eternity, to thirst, and sigh, and cry after God, what a blessing that would be! Time was, perhaps, when you, too, were stony-hearted, and had no such desires; the change is a thing to be grateful for. Bless God for your grief, your agony, your anguish, for anything that is like spiritual feeling: it is better than to be left altogether alone. Here is something comforting for your distressed heart, a blessing is already pronounced upon you.

And we may be sure, dear friends, that God will hear the desires which he has himself created, because *he loves to gratify right desires.* It is said of him in nature, "Thou openeth thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Doth God care for sparrows in the bush, for minnows in the brook, for midges in the air, for tiny things in a drop of stagnant water, and will he fail to satisfy the longings of his own children: nothing gives us more pleasure, perhaps, as parents than to gratify the proper desires of a dear child. We like to see the pleasure that beams upon the little face when the desire is fulfilled. Do you not know that God loves to give us pleasure? It is his joy to do it. It is one of the joys of the great Father's heart to make his children glad. Be assured, my dear friend, it is no joy to God to see you with that dreary countenance. God delights in the delight of his people: he has made a promise to the happy which well fits in with my text: "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." He would have us rejoice in him, for he rejoices over us,

if you need proof, note well the names he gives us: "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." If God delights to fulfil our desires let us not be slack in desiring.

If you want a sure proof that he will grant gracious desires let me remind you *of his promises*. Sometimes one promise may stick in the memory, and be better than quoting fifty. Here is the nineteenth verse of the one hundred and forty-fifth Psalm; take it home with you: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." If there is a holy awe of God in your soul, so that you fear him, he will yet fulfil your desire, and your cry shall bring you salvation. The Lord will keep his promise; be you sure of that. Hath he said, and shall he not do it?

What a joy it will be when you get your desire satisfied, and how *you will praise the Lord!* It may not be very long before your soul's longing is before you. This prophecy I venture to make concerning you, that when the Lord has given you the desire of your heart, you will hardly know how to extol him sufficiently. How you will bless and magnify his dear name! and what is more, others will begin to praise him too. In the twenty-first Psalm, when the king had obtained a blessing from God, his subjects began to bless God for him. Read the second verse: "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips." Now, I should not wonder but what before long others will say the like of you;—"The Lord hath done great things for him." His wife, who lamented his deep dejection, will bless God, and say, "Lord, I thank thee that thou hast given him the desire of his heart, and that thou hast not withholden the request of his lips." Godly friends will hear of his deliverance and rejoice, saying, "He who has long been cast down has found the light of God's countenance again," and they will also say, "Thou hast given him the desire of his heart." As you spread your new joy, and perfume the atmosphere with gladness, the saints will bless God that He has given you the desire of your heart. I am persuaded that you will obtain your desire, since it will glorify God for you to have it. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God," and you will praise him and thus glorify him. Go your way, and seek the Lord with confidence through Jesus Christ, and he will bless you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxviii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (Vers. I.), 38, 738.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MASCHIL OF ETHAN.

A MAJESTIC SONG.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."—Psalm lxxxix. 1, 2.

THIS psalm is one of the very choicest songs in the night. Midst a stream of troubled thoughts there stands a fair island of rescue and redemption, which supplies standing-room for wonder and worship; while the music of the words, like the murmuring of a river, sounds sweetly in our ears. Read the psalm carefully and it will rouse your sympathy, for he who wrote it was bearing bitter reproach, and was almost broken-hearted by the grievous calamities of his nation. Yet his faith was strong in the faithfulness of God, and so he sang of the stability of the divine covenant when the outlook of circumstances was dark and cheerless. Nor did he ever sing more sweetly than he sang in that night of his sorrow. Greatly doth it glorify God for us to sing his high praises in storms of adversity and on beds of affliction. It magnifies his mercy if we can bless and adore him when he takes as well as when he gives. It is good that out of the very mouth of the burning fiery furnace there should come a yet more burning note of grateful praise. I am told that there is a great deal of relief to sorrow in complaining; that the utterance of our murmurs may sometimes tend to relieve our pain or sorrow. I suppose it is so. Certainly it is a good thing to weep, for I have heard it from the mouth of many witnesses. Most of us have felt that there are griefs too deep for tears, and that a flood of tears proves that the sorrow has begun to abate. But, methinks, the best relief for sorrow is to sing: this man tried it, at any rate. When mercy seems to have departed, it is well to sing of departed mercy. When no present blessing appears it is a present blessing to remember the blessing of the years gone by, and to rehearse the praises of God for all his former mercies towards us. Two sorts of songs we ought to keep up, even if the present

appears to yield us no theme for sonnets: the song of the past for what God has done, and the song of the future for the grace we have not tasted yet—the covenant blessings held in the pierced hand, safe and sure against the time to come.

Brothers and sisters, I want you at this time to feel the spirit of gratitude within your hearts. What though your mind should be heavy, your countenance sad, and your circumstances gloomy; still let the generous impulse kindle and glow. Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord. It does not seem to me to be much for us to sing God's praises in fair weather. The shouts of "Harvest home" over the loaded wain are proper, but they are only natural. Who would not sing *then?* What bird in all the country is silent when the sun is rising, and the dews of spring are sparkling? But the choicest choir charms the stars of night, and no note is sweeter even to the human ear than that which comes from the bare bough amidst the abundant snows of dark winter. O sons of sorrow, your hearts are tuned to notes which the joyful cannot reach: yours is the full compass and swell. You are harps upon which the chief player on stringed instruments can display his matchless skill to a larger degree than upon the less afflicted. I pray he may do so now, by leading you to be first in the song. We must all of us follow, and some of us will not readily yield to be outstripped in this holy exercise. Like Elijah, we will try to run before the king's chariot in this matter of praise. Accounting ourselves the greatest debtors of all to the grace and mercy of God, we must and will sing loudest of the crowd, and make even

> "Heaven's resounding arches ring
> With shouts of sovereign grace."

I invite your attention to two things. First, we shall look at *the work of the eternal builder*—"Mercy shall be built up for ever"; then, secondly, we shall listen to *the resolve of an everlasting singer*—"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever."

I take the second verse first: it is needful for the handling of our subject. You know, in the *book of common prayer* the rubric prescribes concerning a certain form of words that it is "to be said or sung." We will do both. The first part we will have is the verse which begins "*I have said*"; and then the second part shall be the verse which begins "*I will sing.*" It shall be said and sung too. God grant we may say it in the depth of our heart, and afterwards that our mouth may sing it, and make it known unto all generations. May the Spirit of all grace fill us with his own power.

I. First, then, let us contemplate THE ETERNAL BUILDER, AND HIS WONDERFUL WORK. "I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."

I can see a vast mass of ruins. Heaps upon heaps they lie around me. A stately edifice has tottered to the ground. Some terrible disaster has occurred. There it lies—cornice, pillar, pinnacle, everything of ornament and of utility, broken, scattered, dislocated. The world is strewn with the *débris.* Journey where you will the desolation is before your eyes. Who has done this? Who has cast down this temple? What hand has ruined this magnificent structure? Manhood, manhood it is which has been

ed, and Sin was the agent that effected the Fall. It is man by his sin. Iniquity has done it. O thou devastator, what tions hast thou wrought in the earth! What desolation thou ade unto the ends of the world! Everywhere is ruin; every- s ruin. Futile attempts are made to rebuild this temple upon its ap, and the Babel towers arise out of the rubbish and abide for ı, but they are soon broken down, and the mountain of decay ruption becomes even more hopeless of restoration. All that s done with his greatest effort is but to make a huger display total failure to recover his position, to realise his ostentatious r to restore his own fleeting memories of better things. They ild, and they may pile up stone upon stone, and cement them r with untempered mortar, but their rude structure shall all ı to the dust again, for the first ruin will be perpetuated even to . So must it be, for sin destroys all. I am vexed in my spirit e troubled as I look at these ruins, fit habitations for the bittern ı dragon, the mole and the bat. Alas for manhood that it be thus fallen and destroyed!

what else do I see? I behold the great original Builder coming om the ivory palaces to undo this mischief; and he cometh not ıplements of destruction, that he may cast down and destroy estige, but I see him advancing with plummet and line, that he ır, set up, and establish on a sure foundation a noble pile that t crumble with time, but endure throughout all ages. He cometh ith mercy. So "I said" as I saw the vision, "Mercy shall be built ever." There was no material but mercy with which a temple e constructed among men. What can meet the guilt of human but mercy? What can redress the misery occasioned by wanton ssion but mercy? Mere kindness could not do it. Power alone Omnipotence—could not accomplish it. Wisdom could not mmence until Mercy stood at her right hand. But when I rcy interpose I understood the meaning. Something was to ı that would change the dreary picture that made my heart n, for at the advent of Mercy the walls would soon rise, e roof ascended high and the palace received within its reno- lory the sublime architect who reared it. I knew that now ould be songs instead of sighs, since God had come, and come y. Beloved brethren and sisters, blessed was that day when the Benjamin of God, his last-born attribute, appeared. Surely the son of our sorrow, but it was the son of his right hand. ıad been no need of mercy if it had not been for our sin; thus est evil the Lord took occasion to display the greatest good.

ı Mercy came—God's darling, for he saith he delighteth in mercy was there hope that the ruins of the Fall would no longer be the ıl misery of men. I said, "Mercy shall be built up." Now, if ely scan the passage you will clearly perceive that the psalmist idea of God's mercy being manifest in building, because a great ıas to be repaired, and the ruins of mankind are to be restored. uilding, it is a very substantial operation. A building is some- ıich is palpable and tangible to our senses. We may have plans ımes which are only visionary, but when it comes to building,

as those know who have to build, there is something real being done, something more than surveying the ground and drawing the model. And oh, what real work God has done for men! What real work in the gift of his dear Son! The product of his infinite purpose now becomes evident. He is working out his great designs after the counsel of his own will. What real work there is in the regeneration of his people. That is no fiction. Mercy is built, and the blessings that you and I have received have not mocked us; they have not been the dream of fanatics, nor the fancy of enthusiasts. God has done real work for you and for me, as we can bear testimony, and as we do bear testimony at this hour. "For I have said, Mercy shall be built." That is no sham, no dream; it is the act and deed of God. Mercy has been built. A thing that is built is a fixed thing. It exists—exists really, and exists according to a substantial plan. It is presumed to be permanent. True, all earthly structures will moulder and decay, and man's buildings will dissolve in the last great fire, but still a building is more durable than a tent, or a run-up lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and "I have said, Mercy shall be built." It is not a movable berth, but a fixed habitation—I have found it so. And have not you? God's mercy began with some of you—no, I must not talk about when it began, but I mean you began to perceive it many years ago now, when these heads that are now bald or grey had locks bushy and black as a raven—when you were curly-headed boys and girls, that clambered on your father's knee. You remember, even then, the mercy of your God, and it has continued with you—a fixed, substantial, real thing. Not the old house at home has been more fixed than the mercy of God. There has been a warm place for you by the fireside from your childhood until now, and a mother's love has not failed; but more substantial than a house has been the mercy of God to you. You can endorse the declaration of David: "I have said, Mercy shall be built."

A building is an orderly thing as well as a fixed thing. There is a scheme and design about it. Mercy shall be built. God has gone about blessing us with designs that only his own infinite perfections could have completed. We have not seen the design yet in the full proportion. We shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise when we see it all carried out; but we perceive already some lines, some distinct traces of a grand design, and I said, as I caught first one thought of God, and then another, of his mercy toward me, "Mercy shall be built." I see that it shall. This is no load of bricks shot out. It is polished stones builded one upon another. God's grace and goodness toward me have not come to me by chance, or as the blind distribution of a God who cared for all alike, and for none with any special purpose. No, but there has been as much a specialty of purpose to me as if I were the only one he loved, though, praised be his name, he has blessed and is blessing multitudes of others beside me. As I discovered that in all his dealings of mercy there was a plan, I said, "Mercy shall be built," and so it has been. Yea, more, if I had the time, I should like to picture to you the digging out of that foundation of mercy in the olden time, the marking out of the lines of mercy in the predestinating purpose and the ancient covenant of God. Then I would appeal to your experience, and entreat you to observe how progressively, line upon line, the divers promises have been verified to you

up till now. With what transport you would say, "Yes, the figure may run, if it likes, on all fours, yea, and may go on as many legs as a centipede, and yet there shall be no spoiling of it, the metaphor is so good. Mercy has been in course of construction, and is now being reared." So the song begins, "Mercy shall be built."

But now he says, "Mercy shall be built up." Will you try to think for a minute upon these words—"built up"? It is not merely a long, low wall of mercy that is formed, to make an inclosure or to define a boundary, but it is a magnificent pile of mercy, whose lofty heights shall draw admiring gaze, that is being built up. God puts mercy on the top of mercy, and he gives us one favour that we may be ready to receive another. There are some covenant blessings that you and I are not ready to receive yet; they would not be suitable to our present circumstances. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Weak eyes that are gradually recovering their use must not have too much light. A man half starved must not be fed at once upon substantial meat: he must have the nutriment gently administered to him. An excess of rain might inundate the land and wash up the plants, while gentle showers would refresh the thirsty soil and invigorate the herbs and the trees. Even so mercy is bestowed upon us in measure. God does not give us every spiritual blessing at once. There are the blessings of our childhood in grace, which we perhaps shall not so much enjoy when we come to be strong men; but then the blessings of the strong man and of the father would crush the child, and God aboundeth toward us in all wisdom and prudence in the distribution of his gifts: and, as I thought of that, I said, "Yes, mercy shall be built up. There shall be one mercy on another."

Would that I had a vivid imagination, and a tongue gifted with eloquence; then I would try to portray the twelve courses of the new Jerusalem, and show how the stones of fair colours came one next to the other, so that the colours set each other off, and blended into a wondrous harmony; but I can clearly see that the mercy of the azure shall not come first, but there shall be the mercy of the emerald to underlie it, and there shall be an advance made in the preciousness of the stones with which God shall build us up, and we cannot tell what the next is to be; certainly not what the next after that is to be, nor the next after that, and the one to follow after that. But as I saw half-a-dozen of the courses of God's mercy, I said, "His mercy shall be built up." I can see it rising tier on tier, and course on course, and it gathers wonders. The longer I gaze the more I am lost in contemplation. Silent with astonishment, spell-bound with the fascinating vision, I think, I believe, I know that—"Mercy shall be built up." Moreover, my expectations are awakened. I am waiting eagerly for the next scene. The designs of mercy are not exhausted; the deeds of mercy are not all told; the display of mercy must reach higher than has ever yet dawned upon my imagination. Its foundations were laid low. In great mercy he gave me a broken heart. That was pure mercy, for God accepts broken hearts; they are very precious in his sight; but it was a higher mercy when he gave me a new heart, which was bound up and united in his fear and filled with his joy. Oh, brethren, let us remember how he showed us the evil of sin, and caused

us to feel a sense of shame. That was a choice mercy, but it was a clearer mercy when he gave us a sense of pardon. Oh, it was a blessed day when he gave us the little faith that tremblingly touched his garment's hem. It was better when he gave us faith as a grain of mustard seed that grew. It has been better still when by faith we have been able to do many mighty works for him. We do not know what we shall do yet when he gives us more faith. Far less can we imagine how our powers shall develop in heaven, where faith will come to its full perfection. It will not die, as some idly pretend. There we shall implicitly believe in God. With the place of his throne as the point of our survey, we shall see nothing but his sovereign will to shape events; so with joyful assurance of hope we shall look onward to the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and the glory that is to follow. We shall sit in heaven, and sing that the Lord reigneth; we shall gaze upon the earth, and behold how it trembles at the coming of the King of kings; and with radiant faces we shall smile at Satan's rage. We do not know what any one of our graces may be built up into, but if you are conscious of any growth in any grace, you have learnt enough to appreciate the oracle that speaketh in this wise—"I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever."

Once again would I read this verse with very great emphasis, and ask you to notice how it rebukes the proud and the haughty, and how it encourages the meek and lowly in spirit. "I have said mercy shall be built up for ever." In the edification of the saints there is nothing else but mercy. Some people seem to fancy that when we get to a certain point in grace we do not need to sue for mercy. My dear friends, if any of you get into that humour that you say, "I need not make any confession of sin, I need not ask pardon of sin," you are trifling with the very truths of which you seem to be tenacious. I do not care what doctrine it is that brings you there; you are in a dangerous state if you stop there. Get away back directly. Your right position is at the throne of grace, and a throne of grace is meant for people that want grace, and you need grace now; never more than now. Without mercies new every morning, as the manna that fed the Israelites of old, your days will be full of misery. Your Lord and Master taught you to say not only "Our Father which art in heaven," and "Thy kingdom come," but he bade you constantly to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." "I have no trespasses," says one. Tut, brother, go home and look at your own heart. I will have no argument with you. Take the bandage off your eyes. You are about as full of sin as an egg is full of meat. Among the rest of your many sins there is this rotten egg of an accursed pride as to your own state of heart. I said, whatever you say, "Mercy shall be built up for ever." I expect God to deal with me on the footing of mercy, as long as I live. I do not expect that he shall build me up in any way but according to his grace, and pity, and forgiving love. If there be any creatures in this world that can boast of having got beyond the need of asking for mercy, I have not learnt their secret of self-deception. I do know of some professors who climb so high up the ladder that they come down the other side. I fancy that is very much like the wonderful growing in perfection of which they prate. It means full often

going up so high that they are pure saints in their own esteem, but anon they have gone down so low that they are poor lost sheep in the estimation of the churches of Christ. God grant you may not fall by any such process.

"I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever." Brethren, if you and I ever get to the gate of heaven, and stand upon the alabaster door-step with our finger on the glittering latch, unless the mercy of God carry us over the threshold, we shall be dragged down to hell even from the gates of paradise. Mercy, mercy, mercy! His mercy endureth for ever, because we always want it. As long as we are in this world we shall have to make our appeal to mercy, and cry, "Father, I have sinned. Blot out my transgressions." Well, that is, as I have said, what the text declares, "I have said mercy shall be built up," nothing else but mercy. There will not come a point when the angelic masons shall stop and say, "Now then, the next course is to be merit. So far mercy: now the next course is to be perfection in the flesh; the next course is to be no need of mercy." No, no, mercy, mercy, mercy, till the very topstone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "grace, grace unto it." "Mercy shall be built up."

Yet onward glance your eye. "I said, mercy shall be built up for ever." For ever? Well, I have been peering back into the past, and I discover that nothing else but mercy can account for my being or my well-being. By the grace of God I am what I am. The psalm of my life, though filled with varied stanzas, has but one chorus,—his mercy endureth for ever. Will you look back, beloved, on all the building of your life and character? Any of it that has been real building—gold and silver and precious stones—has all been mercy, and so the building will go on. The operation is proceeding slowly but surely. What though at this present hour you may be in grievous trouble? Mercy is being built up for you. "Oh, no," say you, "I am tottering, and my days are declining, and I feel I shall be utterly cast down." Yes, you may be very conscious of your own weakness and infirmity; but the mercy of the Lord is steadfast, its foundation abides firm, not a single stone can be moved from its setting. The work is going on, storm or tempest notwithstanding. There is nothing precarious about the fact that mercy shall be built up for ever. Let not the murky atmosphere that surrounds you blind your eyes—the eyes of your understanding—to this glorious word—"*for ever*." Rather say, if I am well set in this fabric of mercy my castings down are often the way in which God builds up his mercy. I shall be built up for ever. And oh, if it goes on being built up for ever—I am ravished with the thought, though I cannot give expression to it—what will it grow to? What will it grow to? If it is going to be built up in the case of any one of you, say seventy years, oh it will be a grand pinnacle, an everlasting monument to the Eternal Builder's praise: but you see it will go on; it will be built up for ever. What! never cease? No, never. But shall it never come to a pause? No, mercy shall be built up for ever; it shall go on towering upward. Do you imagine that it will go at a slower rate by-and-by? That is not likely. It is not God's way: he generally hastens his speed as he ripens his purposes. So I suspect that he will go on building up his mercy tier on tier,

height on height, for ever. Says one, "Will its colossal altitude pierce the clouds, and rise above the clear azure of the sky?" It will. Read the text: "Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens"—not in the heavens only, but in the "*very heavens*"—the heaven of heavens. He will build up to that height: he will go on building you up, dear brother, dear sister, till he gets you to heaven: he will build you up till he makes a heavenly man of you, till where Christ is, you shall be—and what Christ is, as far as he is man, you shall be; and with God himself you shall be allied—a child of God, an heir of heaven, a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

I wish I had an imagination, I say again, bold and clear, uncramped by all ideas of the masonry of men, free to expand, and still to cry, "*Excelsior*." Palaces, methinks, are paltry, and castles and cathedrals are only grand in comparison with the little cots that nestle on the plain. Even mountains, high as the Himalaya range or broad as the Andes, though their peaks be so lofty to our reckoning, are mere specks on the surface of the great globe itself, and our earth is small among the celestial orbs, a little sister of the larger planets. Figures fail me quite: my description must take another turn. I try, and try again, to realize the gradual rising of this temple of mercy which shall be built up for ever. Within the bounds of my feeble vision, I can discern that it has risen above death, above sin, above fear, above all danger; it has risen above the terrors of the judgment day; it has outsoared the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds"; it towers above all our thoughts. Our bliss ascends above an angel's enjoyments, and he has pleasures that were never checked by a pang; but he does not know the ineffable delight of free grace and dying love. It has ascended above all that I dare to speak of, for even the little I know has about it somewhat that it were not lawful for a man to utter. It is built up into the very arms of Christ, where his saints shall lie emparadised for ever, equal with himself upon his throne, "I said, Mercy shall be built up for ever." The building-up will go on throughout eternity.

Yes, and what is once built up will never fall down, neither in whole nor in part. There is the mercy of it. God is such a Builder that he finishes what he begins, and what he accomplishes is for ever. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not do and undo; or build for his people after a covenant fashion, and then cast down again because the counsel of his heart has changed. So let us sing and praise and bless the name of the Lord. I do hope that, from what little our experience has taught us already, we are prepared to cry, like the psalmist, "I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."

II. Well, now, we come back to the first verse. There are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first, so is it with our text. We have looked at the Eternal Builder, let us now listen to AN EVERLASTING SINGER. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

Here is a good and godly resolution: "*I will sing.*" The singing of the heart is intended, and the singing of the voice is expressed, for he mentions his mouth; and equally true is it that the singing of his pen

is implied, since the psalms that he wrote were for others to sing in generations that should follow. He says, "I will sing." I do not know what else he could do. There is God building in mercy. We cannot assist him in that. We have no mercy to contribute, and what is built is to be all of mercy. We cannot impart anything to the great temple which he is building; yet we can sit down and sing. It seems delightful that there should be no sound of hammer or noise of axe; that there should be no other sound than the voice of song, as when they fabled of the ancient player upon the instruments that he builded temples by the force of song. So shall God build up his church, and so shall he build us as living stones into the sacred structure, and so shall we sit and muse on his mercy till the music breaks from our tongue, and we rise to our feet and stand and sing about it. I will sing of the mercy while the mercy is being built up. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord."

But will he not soon sink these sweet notes and relapse into silence? No; he says, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord *for ever*." Will he not grow weary and wish for some other occupation? No; for true praise is a thirsty thing, and when it drinks from a golden chalice it soon empties it, and yearns for deeper draughts with strong desire. It could drink up Jordan at a draught. This singing praise to God is a spiritual passion. The saved soul delights itself in the Lord, and sings on, and on, and on unwearily. "I will sing for ever," saith he. Not, "I will get others to perform, and then I will retire from the service;" but rather, "I will myself sing: my own tongue shall take the solo, whoever may refuse to join in the chorus. I will sing, and with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness." Oh, that is blessed—that singing personally and individually. It is a blessed thing to be one of a choir in the praise of God, and we like to have others with us in this happy employment; still for all that, the hundred and third Psalm is a most beautiful solo. It begins, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and it finishes up with "Bless the Lord, O my soul." There must be personal, singular praise, for we have received personal and singular mercies. I will sing, I will sing, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.

Now note his subject. "I will sing of the *mercies of the Lord*." What, not of anything else? Are the mercies of the Lord his exclusive theme? "*Arma virumque cano*"—"Arms and the man, I sing," says the Latin poet. "Mercies and my God, I sing," says the Hebrew seer. "I will sing of mercies," says the devout Christian. This is the fount of mercy, whereof if a man doth drink he shall sing far better than he that drinketh of the Castalian fount, and on Parnassus begins to tune his harp.

> "Praise the mount, oh, fix me on it,
> Mount of God's unchanging love."

Here we are taught a melodious sonnet, "sung by flaming tongues above." "I will sing of mercies, I will sing of mercies for ever," he says, and I suppose the reason is because God's mercies would be built up for ever. The morning stars sang together when God's work of creation was completed. Suppose God created a world every day, surely the

morning stars would sing every day. Ah, but God gives us a world of mercies every day: therefore, let us sing of his mercies for ever. Any one day that you live, my brother, there is enough mercy packed away into it to make you sing not only through that day but through the rest of your life. I have thought sometimes when I have received great mercies of God that I almost wanted to pull up, and to "rest and be thankful," and say to him, "My blessed Lord, do not send me anything more for a little while. I really must take stock of these. Come, my good secretaries, take down notes, and keep a register of all his mercies." Let us gratefully respond for the manifold gifts we have received, and send back our heartiest praise to God who is the giver of every good thing. But, dear me! before I could put the basketfuls away on the shelf there came waggons loaded with more mercy. What was one to do then, but to sit on the top of the pile and sing for joy of heart? Then let us lift each parcel and look at each label, and lay them up in the house and say, "Is it not full of mercy? As for me, I will go and sit, like David, before the Lord, and say, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, because I shall never have got through with them. It is true, as Addison puts it—

> "Eternity 's too short
> To utter all thy praise."

You will never accomplish the simple task of acknowledgments, because there will be constantly more mercies coming; you will always be in arrears. In heaven itself you will never have praised God sufficiently. You will want to begin heaven over again, and have another eternity, if such a thing could be, to praise him for the fresh benefits that he bestows. "For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever: therefore will I sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever." What a spectacle it will be as you sit in heaven, and watch God building up his mercies for ever, or, if it may be, to wander over all the worlds that God has made; for I suppose we may do that, and yet still have heaven for our home. Heaven is everywhere to the heart that lives in God. What a wonderful sight it will be to see God going on building up his mercy. Ah, we have not acquired an idea of the grandeur of the plan of mercy. The grandeur of his justice no thought can conceive, no words can paint. Ah, my dear brethren, although there have been expressions and metaphors used about the wrath to come which cannot be found in Scripture, and are not to be justified, yet I am persuaded that there is no exaggeration possible of the inviolability of God's law, of the truthfulness of his threatenings, of the terror of his indignation, or of the holiness of Jehovah, a holiness that shall constrain universal homage; but you must always take care that you balance all your thoughts. In the retributions of his wrath there shall be a revelation of his righteousness: for no sentence of his majesty will ever cast a shadow over his mercy, and every enemy will be speechless before the equity of his award. They that hate him shall hide their faces from him; in burning shame they shall depart to perpetual banishment from his presence. Their condemnation will not dim the purity of his atributes.

The glory of the redeemed will also reveal the righteousness of Jehovah, and his saints will be perfectly satisfied when they are conformed to his likeness. On the summit of the eternal hill you shall sit down and survey that mercy-city now in course of construction builded up; it lieth four square, its height is the same as its breadth, ever towering, ever widening, ever coming to that divine completion which, nevertheless, it has, in another sense, already attained. We know that God in his mercy shall be all in all. "I will sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever," for I shall see his mercy built up for ever.

This singing of Ethan was intended to be instructive. How large a class did he want to teach? He intended to make known God's mercy *to all generations*. Dear, dear, if a man teaches one generation, is not that enough? *Modern thought* does not adventure beyond the tithe of a century, and it gets tame and tasteless before half that tiny span of sensationalism has given it time to evaporate. But the echoes of truth are not so transient; they endure, and by means of the printing press we can teach generation after generation, leaving books behind us as this good man has bequeathed this psalm, which is teaching us to-night, perhaps more largely than it taught any generation nearer to him. Will you transmit blessed testimonies to your children's children? It should be your desire to do something in the present life that will live after you are gone. It is one proof to us of our immortality that we instinctively long for a sort of immortality here. Let us strive to get it, not by carving our names on some stone, or writing our epitaphs upon a pillar, as Absalom did when he had nothing else by which to commemorate himself; but get to work to do something which shall be a testimony to the mercy of God, that others shall see when you are gone. Ethan said, "God's mercy shall be built up for ever," and he is teaching us still that blessed fact. Suppose you cannot write, and your influence is very narrow, yet still you shall go on singing of God's praise for ever, and you shall go on teaching generations yet to come. You Sunday-school teachers, you shall be Sunday-school teachers for ever. "Oh," say you, "no, I cannot credit that." Well, but you shall. You know it will always be Sunday when you get to heaven. There will never be any other day there, but one everlasting Sabbath; and through you and by you shall be made known to angels, and principalities, and powers, the manifold wisdom of God. I teach some of you now, and I often think you could better teach me, some of you old experienced saints. You will teach me by-and-by. When we are in glory we shall all of us be able to tell one another something of God's mercy. Your view of it, you know, differs from mine, and mine from my brother's. You, my dear friend, see mercy from one point; and your wife, even though she be one with you, sees it from another point, and detects another sparkle of it which your eye has never caught. So shall we barter and exchange our knowledge in heaven, and trade together and grow richer in our knowledge of God there. "I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." Then I said, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations." We will go on

exulting in God's mercy so long as we have any being; and that shall be for ever and ever. When we have been in heaven millions of years, we shall not want any other subject to speak of but the mercy of our blessed God, and we shall find auditors with charmed ears to sit and listen to the matchless tale, and some that will ask us to tell it yet again. They will come to heaven, you know, as long as the world lasts, some out of every generation. We shall see them streaming in at the gates more numerously, I hope, as the years roll by, till the Lord comes; and we will continue to tell to fresh comers what the Lord has done for us. We never can stop it; we never can cease; but as the heavens are telling the glory of God, and every star declares in wondrous diversity his praise, so where the stars differ from one another in the glory of God above, the saints shall be for ever telling the story which yet shall remain untold—the love we knew, but which surpassed our knowledge; the grace of which we drank, but yet was deeper than our draughts; the bounty in which we swam until we seemed to lose ourselves in love; the favour which still was greater than our utmost conceptions, and rose above our most eager desires.

God bless you, brethren and sisters, and send you away singing—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to my King."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 201.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"In this most entertaining volume Mr. Spurgeon has desired to 'smite evil' (which he has done very effectively) and to commend goodness. He does not claim originality for his Pictures, but if they be not original the amount of quaintness and freshness which they possess are such as fully to equal that much esteemed quality. Under the heading of thirty-eight proverbial sayings Mr. Spurgeon pours forth a stream of instruction, remonstrance, fun, humour, good advice, wise reflections, and innocent chaff."—*The Record.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHEER FOR THE WORKER, AND HOPE FOR LONDON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."—Acts xviii. 9, 10.

IT is clear from this, dear friends, that even he who was not a whit behind the chief of the apostles sometimes needed special comfort. It is possible that even the bravest of the brave may be afraid. Sinking of heart assailed even Samson while as yet the thousand slain lay in heaps around him. Moses was cast down in the desert, and David on the throne. Even iron will melt, much more a heart of flesh. Remember the faintness of Elijah when he said, "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers," and recollect that this was a lion-like man, one of those ministers of God who are as a flame of fire. The second Elias, he who rebuked Herod to his face, was sadly staggered while he lay in prison: John the Baptist sent to Jesus to enquire, "Art thou he that should come?" No doubt those heroes who have fought the battle of the truth, and have driven back its adversaries, have been men of like passions with us, and some of them of more than ordinary sensitiveness of feeling. Luther said, "Because I seem to be always strong and merry, men think that I walk on a bed of roses; but God knows how it is with me." Perhaps no man ever experienced such mighty joys and such tremendous despairs as did that mighty man, who shook the papacy to its foundation. Even Paul was not without his tendency to fear. He writes in one of his epistles: "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." Do not think, therefore, my dear brother or sister, if in working for Christ you get thoroughly cast down and sick of yourself, that you are undergoing an experience unknown to the sons of God. It is by no means so. Trembling takes hold on all in turns; faintness is common enough on all hands. Fear, like the mist of the valley, steals over the very garden of the Lord, and there is not a flower in all the borders which is not at times bowed down with the weight of the chilly damp.

But the Lord took care to visit his servant when he was in a measure of trouble, or afraid of being so. He came to him in the visions of the night. We do not expect to see the Lord Jesus Christ in visions now, for "we have a more sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place"—we have the word of God, inspired and infallible. We have the whole of the divinely written roll: we can read it when we will, and from its page God speaks with a clear and certain voice. A dream of the night might, peradventure, be only a dream, even in those olden times when God did speak in visions; but this word of the Lord is no delusion. It stands fast for ever and ever, and every promise is sure, being made yea and amen in Christ Jesus. When by faith we take the promise, it is as if Christ did speak it over again to each one of us, for the promise is never exhausted. It is as fresh to-day when I read it as when the eyes of saints a thousand years ago found comfort in it. God is always appearing to you who have believing eyes. God is never silent until we are deaf. He speaks to us morning by morning, and he has precept upon precept for the quiet hours of eventide. The Lord did but appear to Paul during one night, for visions are short and few; but any night you like to wake and open the Scriptures, and seek for the power of the Spirit to rest upon them, you shall hear Jesus speaking to you; and any day you turn to that passage in Isaiah, you shall hear the very words that Jesus spoke to Paul, "Fear not, I am with thee," with these additional words, "I am thy God. When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Besides, visions and such like things belong to the infancy of the church: now that she has grown strong, she exercises a grander faith in God, and needs not that the Invisible should be supplemented by signs and wonders. If you plant a tree in an orchard, it is very common to put a big stake by the side of it to hold it up. Nobody thinks of putting a post to support an apple tree which has been there for the last fifty years. In fact, it could hold the stake rather than borrow support from it. When a ship leaves the docks and passes down the river, you will see it towed out till it reaches the sea; but that same vessel will by-and-by spread all her sails, and with a heavenly breeze to bear her along, she will need no tug to tow her to the desired haven. The church of God to-day is a tree that needs no support of miracle and vision, a vessel that has braved two thousand years the battle and the breeze, and will still, till Christ cometh, outride every storm. At this time, O servants of Jesus, you have the word of God, which is better than visions. Oh, that, to-night, the Lord Jesus would take of his own word, and, by his Spirit, speak it home to all who love him, then will they be as much refreshed as though they were in Patmos with the beloved disciple. My prayer has been especially that the Lord would say to each one here present who knows his name, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." I am to be understood as speaking to every blood-bought man and woman, with the anxious desire that the words of the text should be laid home to the heart of each one. O Spirit of God, make thy servant's word to be as fire among stubble, that so the gospel flame may spread abroad.

I. And, first, brethren, notice briefly THE TENDENCY OF OUR WEAKNESS.

That tendency is revealed in the first word—"Be not afraid." We feel when we newly find Christ, that we must speak for Jesus, and we do so; but after awhile a foolish fear freezes many a tongue, and keeps many a lip silent that ought to be telling out the wondrous story of redeeming love. We get to be afraid. We are not nowadays afraid, as the first Christians might have been, of the amphitheatre and the lions, or of Nero and his sword. Happily we are delivered from almost all open persecution; but there are other things which evidently frighten a good many. For instance, some are afraid to speak for Jesus because of the defects of their education. They fancy that, when educated persons are present, if they say anything for Christ they will make a mistake in grammar or mispronounce a word, and the very learned folks will discover their ignorance, and set them down for dunces. I have heard a young preacher say that, in his early days, when he saw a gentleman with a white cravat come into the village chapel, he felt that he could not preach. Something very dreadful about that, no doubt! Somebody from London has entered the cottage where the dear brother has been trying to talk about Christ, and he is in a cold sweat, he hardly knows why. The stranger has a respectable black coat on, and is very different from the agricultural labourers who make up the usual congregation, and for fear of him the champion of the cross is quaking. Do you not notice that the good brother's voice has undergone a serious toning down? He cannot speak with freedom, and yet, if he only knew it, his best friend in the whole congregation is that well-dressed stranger. He is afraid of a brother who would best sympathise with him and most earnestly pray for him—the very brother who would encourage him most if they could have a half-hour's talk together. Friend, over yonder, are you blushing because this incident has happened once and again to yourself? Do you not think that whenever you have been checked in that way it has been very foolish? Has not pride been at the bottom of it? Should we not be willing to be called blunderers? We should endeavour to do our Lord's work in the best possible manner, but if our education be deficient, and we cannot overcome early disadvantages, ought we therefore to hold back? Should we not be willing to save a soul anyhow? If we can declare the gospel in a masterly manner, by all means let us do it, but if we are slow of speech and uncouth in utterance let not these things silence us. Was not Moses slow of utterance? Was he silent? Did not Isaiah own that his lips were unfit to deliver the message? Was he therefore idle? If a man is learned and educated, let him reckon that his learning should help him to simplicity; and if he is not educated let him talk about Jesus Christ in his own way, with the words that come freshest from his own heart, and let him never be afraid.

I have known others fearful, on the other hand, because they have not gathered educated people to listen to them, but are surrounded by a rough lot, whose manners and habits distress them. Sensitive Christians have shrunk from speaking to such characters, for they said, "Ah, they will turn it all to ridicule, and we must not throw pearls before swine." Brother, are you quite sure that you have any pearls

and are you quite sure that the people are swine? I generally feel as if what I had to say was not so pearly that I need be alarmed about the swine treading on it; and, also, I have felt concerning my congregation that, as they have immortal souls, there is a somewhat about them which differences them from swine; and who am I to be so particular about the reception which men give to my words? Christ spake even to those who refused him, and shall not I do the same? Our Saviour did not mean by that expression what you think he did. Some parts of our experience are choice as pearls, and these we may only tell to God's own people, and not to those who cannot appreciate them; but, as to the gospel, preach it before all the swine that ever can be gathered together, for to such is it sent. What were all the nations in our Lord's day but a swinish multitude, and yet he bade us preach the gospel to every creature. The worse the men the more they need the gospel, and the more we are bound to carry it to them. Brethren in Christ, it is your business, whoever may be around you, still to tell out what Jesus Christ has done for you. "But they would laugh at it." Well, well, there are worse things than that in the world. Making people laugh is not the worst thing that can be done. I would sooner increase mirth in the world than sorrow. If I made men's hearts ache about nothing, as our novelists often do, I would throw away my pen, and hold my tongue; but if, in consequence of some awkwardness or eccentricity, people smile at me,—well, if they are the happier, it cannot hurt me. Why should they not laugh at me? And am I not, after all, ridiculous? "No," says one, "I do not think I am." Ah, but my brother there is a comic side to you as well as to everybody else, and there is something about you, I dare say, that is ridiculous. I have generally found that the man who could not bear to be ridiculed was some precise kind of body who was the very person to excite remark. Oh, be content to take a little of the rough with the smooth for your Master's sake. Some hearts cannot be got at until, first of all, they feel a keen aversion to what they hear. Better that they should rave with wrath than feel nothing. We must get the oyster open somehow, and if this may be done by a tempting bait as well as by sheer force, then let us try the gentle experiment. It may be the creature will only open out of spite, and perhaps it thinks to nip us when it shuts its shell, but we thrust in the knife of the gospel, and the deed is done. While they are criticizing our manner, we can stab at their sin. Sometimes the aversion which people display, and the contempt which they profess to feel for the preacher may only be a secondary means of enabling the gospel to get at them the better; and, if it be so, why should we be afraid?

We have known brethren who have trembled at the slightest degree of publicity. They are tender souls, and do not like to be seen. I would not harshly condemn all, for certain minds are quiet and timid, and must be allowed to do good by stealth. But I cannot thus excuse all, for some are blameably deficient in courage. There is a beautiful modesty about them; but I would have them recollect that modesty is not all the virtues, nor can it be a substitute for them. The soldier who was so very modest that he retired before the battle, I have heard say, was shot. And as for Christian people who are so very modest that they get out of the way of everything that is to be done for Christ, I do not

now how they will answer for it to their superior Officer at the last. ome, dear brother, you sang the other day—

"Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name?"

nd so on; and yet you are a coward. Yes, put it down in English: you re a coward. If anybody called you so you would turn red in the face; nd perhaps you are not a coward in reference to any other subject. What shameful thing it is that while you are bold about everything else ou are cowardly about Jesus Christ. Brave for the world and owardly towards Christ!! A Christian ought to be afraid to be fraid, for his Lord has said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed f me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him lso shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of is Father with the holy angels." "Oh, but I am naturally timid," ays one. It is to you, then, that the Lord's word is addressed: "Say o them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." I have heard, nd I think I have observed, that the bravest men in the hour of danger re timid in the prospect of it. They say that a fire-eater who dashes o the battle is often the man who fails; but he who stands trembling t the first shot, in his inmost soul dreading death, is, nevertheless, he very man to act the hero's part if he is so overpowered by a stern ense of duty that he masters fear and steadily keeps his position with ool, immovable resolve.

"The brave man is not he who feels no fear,
For that were stupid and irrational;
But he whose noble soul its fear subdues,
And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from."

Up, then, ye tremblers, and play the man. In the matter of speaking or Jesus this should not be a severe ordeal. Oh, do not, I pray you, et timidity so check you that you cannot speak a word to your own hildren—cannot pray with your own girl, cannot plead as a father with our own boy, cannot speak as a neighbour or a fellow-workman to the nan who works side by side with you at the bench. May God help you o get out of the cold shade of cowardice, for the text says, "Be not fraid."

Still I hear you say, "I am afraid to speak out for religion because I should bring down upon myself a world of opposition at home." That s painful, my dear friend, but though painful it is a part of the cost which you reckoned upon when you took up the cross to follow Jesus. It s a part of the cost that "a man's foes shall be they of his own house-old." "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father he child," says Christ. It was so in old times; it is so now. It is errible to think of what some young people have had to suffer for being faithful to their convictions; but when we consider that it is all for Jesus' sake, happy are they who are honoured to endure on that account! For his sake, what were it if we were martyred? What were it if all men did forsake us? We ought to have such an esteem for Jesus that if all

were to become our foes, and to hunt us to death, we should still say, "It is well, since hereby I become a living sacrifice for Christ."

Now, I charge every Christian here to be speaking boldly in Christ's name, according as he has opportunity, and especially to take care of this tendency of our flesh to be afraid; which leads practically to endeavours to get off easily and save ourselves from trouble. Fear not; be brave for Christ. Live bravely for him who died lovingly for you.

II. Come we now to the second point—and this we will also speak upon briefly—it is THE CALLING OF OUR FAITH:—"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace."

It is the vocation of faith to be a speaker. When the heart believeth the mouth follows suit and makes confession. Faith made Noah a preacher, and caused it to be said of Abel "he being dead yet speaketh." "I believed," said David, "therefore have I spoken"; and others unite with him in saying, "We believe, and therefore speak." Paul says of the Thessalonians, "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." You see their faith had a sound about it as of a trumpet, and the gospel was made known thereby in all regions. Faith lives on the word, and then gives a voice to that word. A dumb faith is a questionable grace. Faith first speaks *to* Christ, and then speaks *for* Christ. It hears his voice, and then acts as an echo by repeating it.

Why ought those that believe in Christ to speak for him?

I answer, first, because, brethren, *we are debtors;* we are put in trust with the gospel for other people; let us not be false to our trusteeship, but faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Let us take care that the light be not hid under a bushel, and that the talent be not wrapped in a napkin. We have the bread of life in our houses; let it not be hoarded, neither let a single hungry soul knock at our door in vain, because we are asleep or too idle to attend to the call. We are the reservoirs of God's gospel that it may flow out of a hundred pipes to thirsty souls, who may come from all quarters of the earth and drink. Paul says, "I am debtor, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." We owe something to every man that lives. "Oh," says one, "I do not see that." But hath not the Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? That is a word of very wide range, for every human being is your neighbour. The Samaritan was neighbour to the Jew; the Roman Catholic is neighbour to the Protestant; the Mahometan is neighbour to the Christian; and the heathen is neighbour to us all. You never pass "a heathen Chinee," or a Zulu in the street without owing him something, according as you have an opportunity to do him good. We are all of us of one family, and, because of the tie of the one blood, there is a debt of brotherhood from all who are enlightened to those who are yet in darkness. Who can tell what we owe to Christ? He seems to say, "Pay it back to my brethren. If ye love me, feed my sheep; feed my lambs. If you want to do good to me, do good to mine. Bring in those that I have redeemed with blood; for this is the best reward you can give me for having laid down my life for you." You are a keeper of the gospel oracles, my brother; take care, then, that you speak, and are not silent.

But, next, *you and I were saved by the testimony of other people* who spoke to us personally. I owe a great deal of my being brought to Christ to my parents, to whom I would always be grateful for their spiritual care of me; and as a parent, I am to repay that obligation by teaching my own children. I owe very much to a very excellent teacher in a day school. I did try, when I personally taught children, to pay back my teacher by teaching others. I owed still more to such men as Baxter and Bunyan, who left their books for me to read. I have tried to write earnest books, that I may recompense as well as I can the church of God for the loan which it made to me in that direction. Most of all, I owe my decision, under God, to a man I never knew, who humbly and simply preached Christ crucified to me; and I would desire to be always preaching Christ crucified to others, as the best way of making some sort of return. Undoubtedly the most of us were brought to Christ by the personal testimony of others, and therefore we are in duty bound to pass on the sacred deposit. Even in those few cases in which no living voice was used, yet the word of God was made useful to the soul; and where would the word of God have been if it had not been for Wickliffe, and Tyndale, and those holy men who preserved it to us at the peril of their lives, and wrote out a translation of it for the common people, dipping their pens in their own heart's blood to accomplish the deed? We are debtors to the church of God, and let us repay the boon. We shall be shamefully ungrateful unless we do this.

Next, let me say, *how are we to expect the gospel to be kept alive in the world* if we do not hand it on to the next generation as the former generation handed it down to us. It is from one lip to another that the word of God is passed, with a kind of living flame which books are not likely to communicate. Oh, shall it ever be said a century hence, "The people of 1880 never thought of us of 1980? They let the gospel go: they allowed the doctrines to be denied one after the other, and here are we without it to perish in the darkness"? The people of the Tabernacle knew the priceless truth of God, but they cared not to make it known, and here are we in ignorance through their indifference!" Oh, let it never be so. Let not the next century have to rebuke the professors of the present one, and say, "You were false to God. You men never preached the gospel, though you had the gift! You women never told it out to those about you, and so the light flickered and almost went out, and we are now left to suffer for your negligence." May God grant that we may be clear of the blood of souls. What a crime it will be if we murder generations of men by our cowardly silence!"

Besides, it seems to me that *common humanity* calls upon every Christian to seek the salvation of others. They are perishing! Will you let them perish? "God have mercy on them," say you? Yes. Is that all? Have you nothing but that hurried prayer to give them? "Be ye warmed; be ye filled," ye say to the hungry, and ye fill them not from your own stores. God's curse will light on such inhuman conduct. It is ours to labour by pleadings and entreaties to snatch our infatuated neighbours from the fiery wave which will soon overwhelm impenitent sinners, and if we do not earnestly seek them, they shall perish, but their blood will God require at the watchman's hands. He has set each one

of His people to take a part of the watch for the souls of men. Are we awake at our post? Oh, see ye well to this, I pray you, each man, each woman, for himself or herself! If we love God, we must love our brother also. If the gospel has saved us, we must wish to see others saved. Unless we are hypocritical altogether, we must burn with strong desire to bring others to the Saviour. I have been pleased as I have looked round to see such a goodly number of young men here to-night. Never was the weather worse, and yet our numbers are great, and among us are young men in their hundreds. Comrades, I welcome you! I would fain enlist you this night into the service of Christ. Come as volunteers! Or if you cannot manage that, come as pressed men. Oh, that the Lord Jesus Christ may lay his pierced hand on some young men and say, "You are studying; but what for? Study for me and my cause." And to another, "You are working hard to prosper in business, but you have another call and you must consecrate yourself more directly to me." Or to another man, "You are in business, making money, are you using it for me? Are you laying it out for the spread of my kingdom?" I would to God that he would call out to himself a troop of valiant ones at this good hour. I feel somewhat to-night in thinking about London as Farel did when he met with Calvin. Calvin was yet a young man. He had written his famous "Institutes," and Farel, at Geneva, saw what mental force there was in him. Here is the story from Bungener:—

"Farel, alike humble and courageous, had often asked if another would not succeed better than he, and a sort of presentiment had bidden him wait in hope of such a man. Calvin was unwilling to undertake the work, he was not made, he said, for such an office. He was willing to be a labourer in the great harvest which was ripening, or to be a soldier of the Lord, but this, he is convinced, is not his task. If he had rendered some service, it was by means of a book, the fruit of silence and of study. . . . Farel is urgent. . . . Calvin educed fresh reasons, and it seemed as though he wanted to deter Farel by exhibiting to him the defects of his future colleague. He knew himself, he said, he was tenacious and obstinate. Once more he asked that he might be left in obscurity to busy himself in studies: for it was only thus he could be of any value. Then Farel broke out, 'Thy studies are a pretext; I tell thee that if thou refusest to associate thyself with my work, God will curse thee for having sought thyself and not Christ.' Calvin yielded to God and not to man; and the man ever remained dear and venerable in his eyes." Calvin was henceforth prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord, even when his body was tortured with diseases and worn down with pain. Would God I might find some such man here who would this night hearken to the voice saying to him "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." A youth looks round and says, "I wonder whether that young man is sitting next to me?" Never mind about your neighbour, look to yourself. Are you the young man? Are you the consecrated woman? Take heed lest a curse light on you if you are disobedient to the heavenly vision.

III. But now, thirdly, THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF OUR SERVICE. Let us dwell on that a little while. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee."

There is the first encouragement—*God's presence*, "I am with thee." When a man speaks for God, God speaks in him. We never go a warfare for God at our own charges: he is sure to be with the man who is with him. If thou seekest thyself, thou wilt run without God; if thou desirest honour among men, thou shalt have no honour from God; but if thy heart be set upon the blessing of thy fellow men, and the extension of thy Redeemer's kingdom, God is with thee. He never was away from any man who sought holiness, virtue, and eternal life. What cause, then, can there be for fear? If God be with thee, who can be against thee? Have God with thee, and thou hast strength enough, wit enough, gold enough,—for thou hast grace enough. Does he not say, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? He will give thee thought, and judgment, and utterance; and within all, and above all, a mysterious power which none shall be able to resist. He will help thee to acquire what thou hast not, and wisely to use what thou hast. If he give thee not the tongue of the learned, he will use thee where thy want of learning cannot hinder thee. He has a sphere for thee somewhere. Only trust thou in him, and be not afraid. O that precious word, "I am with thee." What more can the most fearful require? Come, be of good courage. Take up thy cross: take up thy daily service; in these shall lie a present comfort and a future reward, and thy God saith, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

The next consolation is *God's protection*. "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." The Jews dragged Paul before the judgment-seat of Gallio, and Paul must have been amazed when he saw the persecutors themselves beaten. The great King knew how to protect his own ambassador. When men meddle with one of God's burning and shining lights they will sooner or later burn their own fingers. There is a disposition about some ungodly men to fly at Christian ministers just as gnats do at candles, and they generally meet with the gnats' fate. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," is still the shelter of God's ministers. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth in judgment against thee thou shalt condemn," is a promise which abides the same. "Still," says one, "I am half afraid." But then the Lord is your protection, and who is he that shall harm you if ye follow that which is good? How feeble all your enemies are. Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as dust. "Fear not them which can kill the body, but afterwards have no more that they can do; but fear him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you fear him." The protection of God should be a constant fountain of comfort to God's people.

The last comfort is *God's predestination*. Predestination is an ugly word to some people, but I cannot help that. Here is the doctrine in the text,—"I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city"; that is to say, many who belonged to Christ, though they were as yet heathens. The Lord does not speak of those who were converted. Paul did not need a revelation in the night to tell him that God had much people in that city, if by that was meant the persons who professed faith in Christ, for he knew all about them; night and day had he watched over them. But God knew

that he had an elect people in Corinth whom he must save—a redeemed people that Christ specially bought from among men to be his own people, of whom the Lord had said, "Other sheep have I that are not yet of this flock." Paul was cheered by the good news that God had many chosen and redeemed ones in Corinth, whom he must save.

I learn from this that *the doctrine of God's predestination is no check to labour.* "If there are so many that will be saved," says one, "then why do you preach?" That is why we do preach. If there are so many fish to be taken in the net, I will go and catch some of them. Because many are ordained to be caught, I spread my nets with eager expectation. I never could see why that should repress our zealous efforts; it seems to me to be the very thing that should awaken us to energy—that God has a people, and that these people shall be brought in. Why, it nerves me to labour when I remember that his word shall not return void; it shall prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. If God has ordained to save men, yet it is a part of the ordinance that they shall be saved through the preaching of the word, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"; and not without faith and the word shall any man be saved; nor has God ever said that any should, or ever purposed that any should. The purpose embraces the means for the carrying out of the purpose, and that decree which predestinates the salvation of many in Corinth predestinates that Paul shall come there, and that he shall stop there a year and a half, and night and day with tears shall seek the souls of men.

What a comfort it ought to be to all earnest workers that God has many people yet unsaved whom he will save and must save; thus we go to work under the sweet shadow of the divine decree, stimulated by it to labour with all our might.

The next thing we learn is that the *certainty of success should be a great stimulus to us.* That is why the Lord said to Paul, "I have much people in this city." You and I are bound to preach the gospel, even if never a soul were converted by it; for the great object of the gospel is the glory of God, and God is glorified even in those who reject the gospel. Still, it is a very sweet help to earnestness, when we know that we shall not labour in vain, or spend our strength for nought. "I have much people in this city" nerves Paul to go forth and tell out bravely in every place that word which is to bring the people of God home to himself.

But, next, we see very clearly that *old means and methods are quite sufficient to save souls.* Our Lord did not say, "Paul, be not afraid, but deliver a Sunday afternoon lecture with a nonsensical title and little or no gospel in it." No, no; but "Speak, and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city." God's way of saving souls is the best way, after all. You and I may get up all sorts of inventions, and he may wink at our follies, and let us go on with them, but his way of saving souls is speaking the gospel, and nothing other than the gospel. I should like to see in the world again a revival like that under Jonathan Edwards, in which there were no extravagances, no utterances of false doctrine, no making a noise and a riot, but just the preaching of the old-fashioned doctrines of grace. Those truths brought on a revival of a deep and enduring kind. Men were filled with an awful fear of God, and they repented bitterly, and mended their ways, and sought to

Jesus in dreadful earnest, and rested not till they found him. They did not sing jigs, but they wept as one that is in bitterness for her firstborn. They flaunted no banners, but they laid hold on Jesus in the secret of their souls. They did not often shout, but they went home and talked one to another of what God had been doing in their souls, and they lived near to him. I would like to see that old kind of work and life among us again. The Holy Ghost may work as he pleases, but still that order of revival seemed to be deep and permanent, and the results were found after many days; whereas, nowadays, where are the converts of your revivals? Where are the converts after a little time has passed? All Paul did when he knew there was much people in that city was just to go and speak the gospel and not be afraid: I, for one, mean to keep to the old-fashioned way.

Once again, dear friends, *usefulness*, according to the text, *is the best protection a man can have.* Notice that. "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." When God means to save people by any man, that man will live till the chosen are ingathered. He may go to sea, but storms cannot drown him; he may be waylaid by ungodly men, but robbers cannot hurt him; he is immortal till his work is done. There is no protection for anybody, depend upon it, like usefulness; the branch that bears fruit God will not allow the goat to browse upon, or the blast to wither. Men of God have gone into fever lairs, using all care and precaution, and they have been protected from the pestilence. It has happened that Christian men have been in perils by robbers, perils by false brethren, perils everywhere, but they have survived all, and triumphed in all: and when they have not been thus upheld it may have been because their ministry was ended. They went home because their day's work was over. Where should they go else? They went back to their Father, for their Father had no more need of them abroad. As long as God has anything for you to do nothing will ever kill you, my brother. Go a-head, and fear not. "I have much people in this city," go thou to win them, and thou shalt be safe.

I believe that our position at this time is very much that of Paul, for we, too, hope, trust, and believe that God has much people in this city. What a city it is! Not one among us has any idea of the size of London. You shall go to-day to a well-remembered spot and find yourself on a sudden in a region which you never saw before—a township which has sprung up in a night. I remember an old oak tree, and a pond with geese, and cowslips growing in the meadow. It is a mile in town at the present moment, and the tree is gone and everything about it. Instead of a hedgerow I sigh to see an endless wilderness of brown bricks and stucco. Oh, this great city! It grows at an awful rate, but God has much people in it depend upon it. I believe in London. God means to bless it largely. You will say, "Why?" Well, I look back upon its past history, and I have hope. The martyrs' blood lies here. When all the country was yielding its martyrs London furnished its full share. On this very spot where we now are three were burnt for the truth's sake, old Chronicles say, "At the Butts at Newington, three Anabaptists were burnt." These were among the earliest of martyrs, before Protestants were known or thought of. Always were Anabaptists a prey, and they who killed them thought they did God service. Members of our ancient

persecuted church were often in London burnt for the truth's sake and for Christ's sake, and from the ground their blood is calling still. All over this London of ours, the preaching of the gospel was precious in the old times. You hear the name of "Gospel Oak," as you travel in the North of London, and the tree was so called because there the gospel was preached, and crowds gathered beneath its shade to listen to the joyful sound. All about the city secret bands met to worship God after the gospel way. Now, the Lord will never let the blood of the martyrs die out; it will for ever be the seed of the church.

See, again, how London kindled with holy fire in the days of Whitfield and Wesley. Go but a mile from this place, and notice Kennington Park, once Kennington Common. What thousands used to gather there to hear the gospel preached! The men of the south of London loved the gospel, multitudes of them, and they do still. I feel sure that God will bless London yet, because at this very moment, if the gospel is preached so that people can understand it, they will throng to hear it. Alas, poor men cannot understand half the preachers. They preach Latin fit for drawing-rooms. If they would go to Billingsgate and learn English, they might get on. You say, "That would be very rough English!" Well, but the roughest of English might be better than the Latinized jargon of most of our pulpits. When men preach the gospel plainly and simply, they will never lack a congregation in this great city, I am certain of it. Away in a back street, down in a hollow way just beyond Barclay and Perkins's brewery, where there are no cabs, or other public conveyances, right out of the world and into the mud, the crowds came and found out a boy years ago, and they followed him because he preached the gospel in a way which they could understand. They will find a man out anywhere if he will but preach the gospel of Christ. I am sure that the Lord has much people in this city because there is a hungering and thirsting after the gospel, if they could but get at it. Go ahead, then, brothers and sisters. Talk about Christ. Talk about him everywhere. Talk about him in the workshop. Speak about him quietly and modestly, prudently, and gently, but do carry out the blessed words of my text: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." Be this to each one his word of good cheer, "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xviii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—181, 686, 900.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 14TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."—Hebrews ix. 20.

THE apostle declares that whenever God has entered into covenant with man it has not been without the shedding of blood. To a covenant a sacrifice, and to a testament a death, was evidently necessary. It was so when the arrangements of Israelitish worship were first published and established in the wilderness. Paul says, "Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood." He, probably, had in his mind's eye the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Exodus, where we read that after the tribes had entered into covenant with God and promised to keep his law, Moses "sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." As it was in the old dispensation so is it in the new: there could be no divine covenant, even though it be of grace, without the shedding of blood. Inasmuch as the new covenant was not the type, but the substance, a more precious sacrifice was needed, and nobler blood than any which is found in the veins of bulls or of goats. Jesus, the Son of God must die, or the covenant would be unsealed, the testament without force. No covenant blessing comes to us apart from the death of our great sacrifice, for "without shedding of blood is no remission," and remission is one of the earliest of the gifts of grace. If we cannot even begin the heavenly life by receiving forgiveness of sins without coming into connection with the blood we may be sure that no further blessing can come to us apart from it. It seems to be absolutely necessary that when God comes into communication with guilty man it must be through an atonement, and that atonement must be made by blood, or by the sacrifice of a life.

I shall not dwell upon the blood-sheddings of the old covenant, for they are only intended to be types of the one great blood-shedding in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The death of a chosen victim was the emblem of the death of Christ, the sprinkling of the people with blood was the type of the application of the blood of Christ to the conscience of believers; and every single item of the ceremony, if looked into, would furnish points for edification; but of these we cannot now speak particularly, as the apostle said on a like occasion. It suffices us to meditate at this time upon the blood of our Lord Jesus, once for all shed on Calvary, trying to understand its relationship to us according to the tenor of the text,—"This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." The words which Moses used in the wilderness concerning the typical sacrifice are far more emphatic as we point you to the bleeding Saviour on the cross, and say, "Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you."

The wisdom of God had many ends to serve in connecting his covenants with blood-shedding, and this will be very evident if we think of its effect upon our own hearts. We all feel somewhat of awe in connection with the thought of blood. It is no light thing to see an animal slaughtered; at least, it is not so to me: I cannot endure the sight. As to our fellow-men, we can scarcely see the tiniest crimson stream issuing from a wound in their flesh without being distressed. Tender and sensitive natures, such as all should possess, regard the life of men with great care, and the blood, as its token, with great reverence. We view a corpse with awe, and if we were called to look upon one who had been slain we should view the body with horror. If any one of us should pass a spot stained with a man's heart's blood, we should tread lightly, and hurriedly, feeling "how dreadful is this place." The Lord God intended that there should be much of awe about every covenant that he made with man, for it is a matter of great solemnity. The covenant of works might well be surrounded with dread, for by reason of our sin it was soon turned into a curse. The quaking mountain, the thick darkness, and the trumpet voice were fit accompaniments of the law which brings condemnation, and so also were the basons filled with blood. As for the covenant of grace, it also is rightly surrounded with awe, even with such awe as that which bows down at Calvary amid the mid-day midnight, the rending of rocks, the opening graves, and the groans of the expiring Son of God; for a God of love is nevertheless a God of holiness, and the God who passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin, is also a God who first vindicates the honour of his broken law. The Lord intended that pardon and all other covenant blessings should come to us in such a way that we should never think sin a trifle, nor conclude from the freeness of grace that men were free to transgress. The death of Jesus manifests the solemnity of God's dealings with sin, and is fitted to bow the soul in lowliest humility before God. The flowing of the blood and water from the wounded side, the wrapping of the dead body in the grave-clothes, the burial in the sepulchre,—these are those sad attendants of the covenant of grace which make us tender of heart while we rejoice in the divine favour. With holy trembling we think of every promise, for the shadow of the cross is over all.

Somewhat of aversion and shrinking crosses most minds at the thought

of blood. One feels sickened and saddened. The sight of murdered Abel must have been terrible indeed to Adam and Eve, unused as they were to gaze on blood. If it would be so to them after the Fall, what would the sight have been to them had they remained pure and perfect beings? In proportion to purity will be the shock to the mind in the presence of death and blood. Cruel men might gloat over a battlefield, but to the most of us the sight of a single violent death would be horrible to the last degree. Manhood till it is brutalized has the greatest possible aversion to the sight of blood, and it is as though God had selected as the token of atonement that which would show to us his antipathy to sin. He would move us to aversion towards evil from a sight of its painful and deadly consequences. He as good as tells us that while a thing is stained with evil he will sooner destroy it than have it in his sight. Man, the masterpiece of the divine creation, shall sooner be slain and his life flow out upon the ground than be allowed to wallow in iniquity. It was intended that even while we are being pardoned we should feel horror at having been defiled with sin. But this aversion must not be used sinfully, as so ne have used it. I have heard of persons saying, when we preach of the blood of Christ, "I could not bear to hear so much about blood! It quite disgusted me." I want you to feel shocked because your sin requires such an awful cleansing, but you must not be shocked at the great sacrifice itself. That would be grievous indeed to me, and fatal to you. Can you bear, then, to reject that which alone can save you? Are you so delicate that you turn away from the only cleansing that can purge you from soul-destroying stains? Dare you count the blood of the covenant to be a common, or even a disgusting, thing? I pray you be not so profane. Let a holy tremor seize you as you see the Crucified, and watch the pouring forth of his heart's life-stream! Smite on your breast as you look on him whom you have pierced! Grieve that your sin should require such a dread atonement. Lament that you should be guilty of such a horrible thing that even God's own brightest One must bleed ere trangression, with all its scarlet dye, could be washed out. But ever love and reverence the blood of Jesus Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

The types of the old law were meant to excite horror at sin, and awe in the presence of its atonement. It must have been almost a shocking thing to enter into the tabernacle at the time of the great sacrifices, and, indeed, at any time, for year after year there never passed a day without blood being sprinkled on the holy curtains. All around, wherever the worshipper came, he saw tokens of the slaughter of bullocks and goats and calves and rams. Everywhere he saw that God could not be approached without atonement,—atonement by sacrificial death. The priests threw the blood of victims in bowls at the foot of the altar, and "almost all things were by the law purged with blood"; and all to make man see that God saw something horrible in sin, which only death could hide, and that sin was so intolerable to him that, unless a propitiation had been made, it had not been possible for his pure and holy mind to speak with man at all, or hold amicable commerce with him. If the aversion which seems natural to us at the sight of blood should lead us to shudder at the cause of its shedding, it will be well.

I beg you now to come with me to Calvary and see that great sight,

even Jesus Christ himself offered up as a sacrifice for guilty men. Herein is a marvellous thing. We have heard so often of it that we do not note the miracle of it as we ought to do; but it is the most marvellous thing that ever happened, that ever can happen, or that ever can be imagined to happen,—that he who ever liveth, even God himself, should deign to take into union with himself a body like our own, and that, being found in fashion as a man, he should become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. All former ages are struck dumb with astonishment at this novelty of love,—the bleeding Son of God: and all the ages that are yet to come shall look back to Calvary as the centre of all the wonders that even the wonder-working God himself has ever wrought. The blood of Christ is the ruby gem of the ring of love. Infinite goodness finds its crown in the gift of Jesus for sinners. All God's mercies shine like stars, but the coming of his own Son to bleed and die for rebel men is as the sun in the heavens of divine grace, outshining and illuminating all. It surpasses thought: how then shall I hope worthily to set it forth in words?

I. Of that death and of that blood we shall speak in a fourfold way; and first, we shall take the verse as it would most accurately be translated —the blood of Jesus Christ is THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT. There cannot be much doubt that the word, rendered "testament," should be translated "covenant." It is the word used for covenant in other passages, and though our translators have used the word "testament," many critics go the length of questioning whether the word can bear that meaning at all. I think they are too rigid in their criticism, and that it does bear that meaning in this very chapter; but, still, all must admit that the first, and most usual meaning of the word, is "covenant." Therefore, we will begin with that reading, and consider the blood of Jesus as the blood of the covenant.

First, looking from the cross to the covenant, the blood *proves the intense earnestness of God* in entering into covenant with man in a way of grace. The covenant of grace is on this wise: the well-beloved Son of God stood as our representative, as the second Adam, heading up in himself all those whom the Father gave him. He covenanted with God on our behalf that he would vindicate the broken law, and that he would also keep it in every jot and tittle on our behalf. As for the Father, he covenanted that because of the sacrifice which the Son would offer, and the obedience which he would render, he would put away the sin of his people, and they should be accepted in love. This is the covenant of grace and faithfulness, and to show that the august covenanters were not playing at covenant-making they sealed the compact with blood. How dreadfully in earnest was God the Father when he gave his Son! How deeply in earnest was the Son when he gave his life! You may play with these things if you dare, but God never will. You may sprinkle this blood upon the threshold, where never should it fall, and trample on it with careless feet, but God only sees it in the place of honour, on the lintel and the side posts, and looks upon it as something precious beyond all price. Sinner, you, perhaps, think that God will not really forgive you, and that his promises may only charm your ear to cheat your heart; but it cannot be so. God is in real earnest; if he did not mean mercy he would not have given up his beloved Son. The

best possession of all his unsearchable riches was his Only-begotten, and he took him from his bosom, where he had dwelt serenely evermore, and bade him come below that he might live and die that we might be saved. God is in death-earnest for the salvation of sinners. Let us speak of the great atonement which he has provided with earnest hearts, for it is no light thing. I wish that we never thought about these things without the deepest possible solemnity, that never did preacher speak of them without heart-breaking emotions, and that never did we sing a hymn upon the great sacrifice without prostrating our spirits in the dust before the Most High. Whenever we think of atonement the place whereon we stand is holy ground. The blood of the everlasting covenant proved the earnestness of the great covenant-maker; let us be in earnest too.

Next, *it displayed the supreme love of God* to man. Seeing that he entered into a compact of grace with man, he would let man see how his very heart went forth with every word of promise; and, therefore, he gave up that which was the centre of his heart, namely, Jesus Christ. When Jesus wept over the grave of Lazarus they said, "Behold how he loved him!" but when God gave up his Only-begotten to bleed over the grave of our race, we may more heartily say, "Behold how he loved us!" Brethren, we have but a faint idea of how much the Lord our God loves us. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There was nothing lovable in us, we were enemies to God, polluted and polluting; there was everything in us that was obnoxious to the holy mind of God, and yet, because of the riches of his grace and the supremacy of his mercy, he would love us, and he did love us without bound. Passing by fallen angels, the sovereign Lord looked on the humbler creature, man, and so loved him that he gave up Jesus himself to die on his behalf. Oh that we were touched with some kind of tenderness towards God when we think of this! Man, hath God shown such love to man, and dost thou show such coldness to thy God? Jesus dies in agonies unutterable that the guilty may be pardoned, and do the guilty turn aside as if it were nothing to them that Jesus should die? Can men treat the cross as if it were either a fiction or a trifle? God hath manifested his love in the death of Christ in a way which must have astonished every inhabitant of heaven, and it ought to ravish every native of this lower globe. May the Holy Ghost enable us, as we think of this blood of the covenant, to behold the earnestness of God, and to admire the intensity of his love.

The blood of the covenant, next, speaks to us and *confirms the divine faithfulness.* The main object of thus sealing the covenant with blood is to cause it to be "ordered in all things and sure." Men, in old times, when they made compacts that were intended to be solemnly observed, slaughtered certain beasts as a sacrifice, and when blood was thus spilt there was no drawing back from the engagements. It was a covenant made by cutting or dividing; they cleft the animals in twain, and then those who made the covenant passed in between the divided pieces. No revocation was permitted where agreements were thus ratified. It was a sort of registered contract that never could be changed when once there had been a sacrifice to confirm it. Now it is so with the covenant of grace. It is impossible for God ever to draw back from the covenant

of grace, or to change it in any one of its particulars. He needed not to be held in this manner, for he cannot lie; but that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus, he has been pleased to give his covenant this seal. Well do we sing:—

> "The gospel bears my spirit up;
> A faithful and unchanging God
> Lays the foundation for my hope,
> In oath, and covenant, and blood."

It would be blasphemy to suppose that God would be false to a treaty sealed with the blood of his own Son. A doubt about the love of God, and about the faithfulness of God, is treason against him, for it impugns his faithfulness, and treats him as a liar, or a covenant-breaker, which he can never be. We may think lightly of the dark mistrusts and suspicions of our hearts, but they are no light things after all, for they virtually impugn the sealing power of the blood, and question the faithfulness of God to the covenant, which has most solemnly been confirmed.

Oh thou that seekest after peace through Jesus Christ, it is not possible that God should refuse to accept thee, if thou comest to him through the blood of Jesus, for that were to break his covenant. Oh thou who art resting in Jesus, it is not possible that thy Father should ever forsake thee, or suffer thee to perish, for that were to make the blood-shedding of Christ to be void, and his sacrifice to be of none effect. Oh! blessed covenant, how sure art thou now that the blood of Jesus is shed!

But the blood of the everlasting covenant is more than this,—it is a *guarantee to us of its infinite provision*. There can be nothing lacking for a soul redeemed by Christ between here and heaven; for he that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? All that the Christian wants on the road to glory will be quite inconsiderable compared with what he has already received in the gift of Jesus Christ. Dost thou believe that God will deny thee any necessary thing, O heart, when he has already made his Son to bleed for thee? If he had held back anything, it would have been that costly alabaster box of his Son's body which contained the most precious ointment that ever perfumed earth or heaven; but since he broke that precious casket and poured out the priceless contents, he will deny thee nothing. No good thing will he withhold from thee. He would break up heaven itself if thou shouldst require it, and pour out the whole creation at thy feet if there were need. Already has he given thee his angels to be thy servitors, and his courts to be thy dwelling-place, yea, and his throne to be thy shelter: what else dost thou seek? Yet, if thou askest more, there is more provided; for he gives thee himself to be thy portion. Is not this enough? Is not this all? When he gave thee his Son he gave thee all, for his Son is one with him. Oh, the breadth and length, the height and depth of covenant provisions! That roll of love which has for its seal this precious thing, the blood of Jesus, must contain treasures beyond all estimate. God will supply all our need according to his [redacted]es in glory by Christ Jesus; the blood of Jesus secures this fact.

[redacted]will not dwell longer upon this blood of the covenant when I have

further remarked that this blood *manifests the depth of the need which the covenant was meant to meet.* Many preachers nowadays seem determined to bring everything in God's word down to their own little scale. They carry a foot-rule in their pockets with which to measure up eternal things. They have found out that everlasting does not mean unending; they will one day find out, I dare say, that infinite does not mean unlimited. Sin with them is an inconsiderable offence which it is not worth while to make a fuss about. Man, according to their account, is a poor creature who is struggling to be right, and his offences are the excusable blunders of a well-meaning child, the errors of a poor creature who cannot help making mistakes. Of course the punishment of sin with them is frittered away, and they claim to do this in the name of benevolence, as if it were benevolence to flatter, and a good deed to make sin appear less hazardous, and to take away the moral sanctions which God has set as barriers against evil. It follows in the nature of things that atonement becomes with them a very shadowy affair, something or other which in some way or other reconciles us to God, or has some bearing upon our standing with the divine Being: nobody knows quite what it is,—a misty, hazy, smoky nothing, which they cannot quite deny, but which they forget as much as possible. Brethren, I believe in a great revelation, and to my mind it is clear that, if God himself must become incarnate, and if when he is incarnate nothing else will do but that he must be nailed to a gibbet and die like a felon, there must have been some awful mischief to remove. The race of man must have fallen indeed to need such an expedient as this in order to restore it to holiness and God. If I measure the disease by the remedy, I conclude that the disease must have been deadly; and if when Christ stood in man's stead, being perfectly innocent, nothing else would do as the substitutionary pain but that he should cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" then the desert of sin must have been dire indeed! In the presence of Calvary and its Christ I am persuaded that sin must be an evil so great that it is not possible to exaggerate its horrors. Oh sons of men, your transgressions are black indeed, since they can only be expiated by such a sacrifice! Oh sinful creatures, you required a dying God to save you! You cannot be safe for eternity, you cannot be happy with God in this life, unless the precious blood of Jesus Christ shall wash you. Deceive not yourselves with the notion that peradventure your moralities and your outward religiousnesses may suffice, or that your good intentions may be liberally interpreted; you must, if you would be acceptable with God, feel the sprinkling of the blood of the Son of God, for without shedding of blood there is no remission.

This much comes to us as the teaching of the blood of the everlasting covenant; if we are in covenant with God we shall know the power of the atonement of Christ.

II. But now, secondly, you will bear with me while I take our translator's own words—"This is THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT." Upon the whole, our translation is as nearly perfect as we can look for a human work to be. I do not know what the new translation will turn out to be, but the good men must have risen up very early, and they must have sat up very late if they have produced a version which will

surpass that which has so long been used among us. I do not know, I cannot tell, because I have not seen it; but this translation very well satisfies me at present, and I notice that whenever the translators use a word which is disputed by scholars they have excellent reasons for it, and the more the matter is looked into the more is their judgment valued. They thought a good deal before they settled on their expressions, and as a rule they came to a sound conclusion. In this case there are reasons, and very good reasons, why the word "testament" should be used. Our translators were not inspired, but they were marvellously guided and directed when they made this version, and we may be content to take the text as it stands before us.

Jesus Christ has made a will, and he has left to his people large legacies by that will. Now, wills do not need to be sprinkled with blood, but wills do need that the testator should be dead, otherwise they are not of force. As it was not possible that Christ should die other than a violent death, seeing he must die as a sacrifice, the expression "blood" becomes in his case tantamount to "death." And so, first of all, the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary is the blood of the testament, because it is *a proof that he is dead*, and therefore the testament is in force. If there be a question about whether a man is alive or not, you cannot administer to his estate, but when you have certain evidence that the testator has died then the will stands. So is it with the blessed gospel: if Jesus did not die, then the gospel is null and void. Not without the sprinkled blood does the promise of salvation become yea and amen. Inasmuch as the soldier with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, there was the clearest evidence in that blood that Jesus was really dead, and that his testament is valid and operative. Therein we do rejoice; for though we sorrow that he died, yet are we glad that his legacy of love is all our own. He has died, and lives again, no more to die. Out of the thick cloud of blackest grief which veils our dying Lord there falls a silver shower of peace, more refreshing than all the brooks of earth can yield: the certainty of our eternal life is proven by the certainty of Jesus's death: his blood is the blood of the testament, because it proves the testator's death.

It is the blood of the testament, again, because it is *the seal of his being seized and possessed of those goods which he has bequeathed to us:* for, apart from his sacrifice, our Lord had no spiritual blessings to present to us His death has filled the treasury of his grace. He has pardon to bestow, and justifying righteousness to give, because he died. If he had not shed his blood he would not have completed his part of the covenant, nor have fulfilled the will of God; but when he died, with "It is finished!" upon his lips, then his blood became the seal that covenant mercies were his own, and that they were his to leave to us. Oh treasure up the death of Jesus in your hearts, believers; for, inasmuch as he has enriched you and given you all things necessary for this life of godliness, he has done this out of his own proper stores, which were given him as the reward of his passion.

The blood of the testament, again, is a *direction as to his legatees.* We see who are benefited under his will. To whom did Jesus Christ leave by will the blessings of grace? He must have left them to the guilty because he has left a will that is signed and sealed in blood, and blood is

for the remission of sin. Jesus has made his testament in the character of a sin-atoning sacrifice, and we can only share in it by regarding him under that character. If I am not a sinner I have no interest in the legacy of a bleeding Redeemer. The blood-mark proves that the testament was made for those who need atonement by blood, and that its legacies are bequeathed to sinners. This is one of the most humbling and yet most blessed of all truths. It casts down, and yet lifts up. If I have any grace or any covenant blessing it did not come to me because I was heir to it by nature, or because I had purchased it, or because of any right intrinsic in myself: but because Jesus, when he died, had a right to make his will as he pleased, and he did so make it that he would give himself and all that he had to such a poor, needy, empty, lost, and guilty sinner as I am. Not because of any good in us do these blessings come to us, but all of our Lord's good will who made the testament of love and sealed it with his heart's blood.

Brethren, the legatees in Christ's will are those who come and accept his atonement. There is nothing in Christ's will for any person who will not trust his blood. I know of no mercy under heaven for any man who, knowing of the atoning sacrifice, wilfully puts it away. Certain teachers talk about a "larger hope." I read nothing of this fancy in the Scriptures, and I dare not go beyond the word of the Lord, and I am content to say with Moses, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Other hope, large or small, I know not of from revelation, except this one,—"He that believeth in him is not condemned." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Only-begotten Son of God." Thus, then, the blood of the covenant is a direction as to the legatees.

And, as I said before, what an index it is of the value of the legacies, since even the seal upon the will is no less in value than the heart's blood of the heir of all things! What treasures must be ours under such a covenant! What riches are yours and mine my brethren, if we are really trusting in Jesus!

III. But now, in the third place, I must speak for a minute or two upon that blood from another point of view. IT WAS THE BLOOD OF CLEANSING. "This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." Moses sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry: the object of the sprinkled blood was to purify, so that the book and the people, and all things upon whom the blood fell might be allowed to stand in the presence of the thrice holy God, being regarded by him as cleansed. Think of this for a short time.

This blood of the covenant and of the testament is a blood of purification to us. Wherever it is accepted by faith it takes away all past guilt. Wonder of wonders! Years of sin vanish in a moment—encrustations of guilt disappear in a single instant, and man, hitherto guilty and condemned, is rendered perfectly clean in God's sight, and accepted in the Beloved, because he believeth in Christ Jesus. So

priceless a sacrifice as that of the Son of God is of boundless efficacy for the eternal removal of all evil once for all. And this is but the beginning of our purification, for that same blood applied by faith takes away from the pardoned sinner the impurity which had been generated in his nature by habit. He ceases to love the sin which once he delighted in: he begins to loathe that which was formerly his choice joy. A love of purity is born within his nature; he sighs to be perfect, and he groans to think there should be about him tendencies towards evil. Temptations which once were welcomed are now resisted; baits which were once most fascinating are an annoyance to his spirit. The precious blood when it touches the conscience removes all sense of guilt, and when it touches the heart it kills the ruling power of sin.

The more fully the power of the blood is felt, the more does it kill the power of sin within the soul. I hope you are feeling it to be so. We ought to be ashamed, brethren, if we allow those sins to conquer us now which overcame us years ago; we ought to possess a growing strength against iniquity, a growing abhorrence of everything that is evil, and a growing likeness to Christ; and it will be so if this precious blood is really operating upon our nature, and imparting to it a fulness of life.

> "The cross once seen is death to every vice:
> Else he that died there suffered all his pain,
> Bled, groaned, and agonized, and died in vain."

If you are in any measure failing as to holiness, fly to the blood for help. Perhaps you have not thought enough of late of the dying love of your Lord. His death has a living power about it to breed and nourish holiness within you. Remember there is no slaying sin but by nailing it to the cross. The lance which pierced the heart of Jesus alone can kill the love of sin. You must overcome through the blood of the Lamb: other victory there is none. You will never avoid sin merely by believing it to be your duty to do so; law points the way, but cannot bear us along it. A sense of the great love of Christ to you in bearing your sin in his own body on the tree, and so removing it from you, will give you power to rise superior to temptation. It is charged against some of us, as preachers, that we do not urge men enough to their duties. We deny the charge, and yet we claim that we do better, for we touch secret springs that nerve to duty, and we point to the strength by which virtuous deeds are done. The acceptance of the atonement is the great source of virtue. The grace of God is seen in the atonement of Jesus, by which sin is put away, and thus the heart is won to God and led by gratitude to obey him. The blood of Jesus is the strongest restraint from transgression. We say to the pardoned,—Wilt thou so dishonour the blood which cleanseth thee as to go and live in sin; wilt thou go back to that from which thou hast been redeemed by the death of thy Saviour? Wilt thou roll again in that foul mire out of which Christ has lifted thee, and so do despite to the blood which cleanseth thee, and make it to be to thee as an unholy thing. It must not be. Let but the heart feel the power of the blood of Jesus, and it will growingly aspire after holiness and increasingly attain thereto.

The precious blood is our great security from backsliding, for by it we

obtain daily access to God. It keeps the Christian from grievous relapses, and preserves him unto the coming of his Lord. Wherever the blood of Jesus Christ is really applied perfection must be its ultimate result. There will be battling and striving, but there must be victory ere long. The holier a man becomes the more he mourns over his unholiness. The operations of grace in his soul make him detect the more readily the motions of sin in his members. There is not the sin within him that there was, but he sees that which is there more clearly, and therefore he is more than ever grieved about it. No one calls himself so much a wretched man because sin is within him as he does who is also a thankful man, because God giveth him the victory. You must not judge that you are not growing in sanctification because you are not increasing in your sense of it. Your sense of your own holiness is a poor test, a very doubtful index of your state. Brothers and sisters, if you have really fixed your trust in the atoning blood, and known its power, you are destined to perfection: and all the devils in hell cannot keep you back from it. As sure as you believe, you shall one day stand white-robed amongst the host that know no discord in their song, no wandering in their walk. From this spot where I have preached the Word I must, as a believer, rise to a higher spot, where I shall prove the power of Jesus' blood in an immortality of perfection; and from that pew wherein you sit, believing in the precious blood, you also must pass onward through your pilgrimage until you also reach the fulness of life eternal, for your Lord has pledged himself to keep all those whom the Father hath given him, and you are among them if indeed you believe in him. Those who are justified shall also be glorified. All believers shall yet dwell at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens where there is pleasure for evermore because there is perfection without alloy. May we all through the Spirit by the blood of purging be made whiter than snow.

IV. And then, to close, it is THE BLOOD OF DEDICATION. On the day when Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on the people, and on the book, it was meant to signify that they were a chosen people set apart unto God's service. The blood made them holiness unto the Lord. Moses stood upon an elevated place, and took the scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled the blood on all sides. Try and realize a part of the scene, A man just beneath him is wearing a white robe, and a spot of blood has fallen upon it. He sees it. There it is! Will he not prize the crimson sign? I would have preserved that robe as long as I lived, and the blood-spot too. But what would it mean? To the Israelite it meant consecration to God. He would say, "The blood of the covenant has fallen upon me, and I am henceforth a consecrated man, dedicated to God." Now, unless the blood is upon you, my brother, you are not saved; but if you are saved you are by that very fact set apart to be God's servant. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." A saved man is a bought man; the property of Jesus. Believer, not a hair on your head belongs to you now—you belong to Jesus Christ as his servant as surely as you are redeemed by his blood. Now you are set apart; God's own mark is put upon you. You have believed: that believing has applied the blood to you, and you are Christ's. Cannot

you see the private token which the Lord has set on you? Do you not feel it? Oh, then, own its claims in your daily life.

Being so set apart, you are henceforth ordained with due solemnity to be a servant of God, even as Aaron and his sons were consecrated to their priesthood. I have been sometimes asked, "Were you ever ordained?" Yes, I was; not by the laying on of the hands of any mortal man, but by that precious blood whose purchase-power I feel. When that blood fell upon me, and I rejoiced in its cleansing power, I longed at once to tell of its efficacy do others. I hope I can say most honestly to my Lord—

"Ere since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die!"

That same blood has fallen on you, brother, sister, and it has ordained you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. Is it not written, "Thou wast slain, and hast made unto our God kings and priests"? The slaying of Christ is the ground of our priesthood, and the claim for our perpetual service. Let us praise for ever the Lord who has wrought everlasting redemption for us. If we have not Milton's power of song, at least let us come to the same resolve at which he arrived:—

"O unexampled love!
Love nowhere to be found less than divine!
Hail, Son of God, *Saviour* of men, thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth, and never shall my harp thy praise
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin."

Because of all this we are to lead a separated life. It is not for us to live as others live, who walk in the vanity of their minds. We are not to seek the world's pleasures, we are not to besmear ourselves with its folly and its selfishness. God's people, if they act as they should do, are a separated people. It is written, "The people shall dwell alone, they shall not be numbered among the nations." The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, and as the shepherd marks his sheep, so, with the precious blood of Christ applied by faith, hath God marked his own elect, that they should abide in Christ, and go no more out, no more mingling with the sons of men, nor joying in their joys, nor serving their lusts. The Lord's portion is his people, and his cry to them is, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate." God give you to feel this blood of the covenant, this blood of the testament, this blood of cleansing, this blood of the setting apart, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews ix., Exodus xxiv. 1—10.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—410, 412, 395.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BELIEVER CATECHIZED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 21ST, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Believest thou this?"—John xi. 26.

THE Saviour said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. BELIEVEST THOU THIS?"

When believers are sorrowful they may be assured that a consolation is provided exactly adapted to their cases. For every lock that God has made he has provided a key. As every blade of grass has its own drop, so every grief has its comfort. I doubt not that for every pain which racks this mortal frame there is an anodyne among the herbs of the field, and for every disease there is a remedy in God's wondrous laboratory if we could but find it. As for us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we may rest assured that if we are borne down by excessive sorrow it is almost always our own fault, and arises from a defect in our faith; for if our faith were as strong as it ought to be we should "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, and in distresses, for Christ's sake;" we should find that as our tribulations abounded so would our consolations also abound by Christ Jesus. It will be well, therefore, when we are greatly distressed, not so much to look to the apparent cause of the present trouble as at the condition of our own hearts; it will be wise to enquire wherein our faith is wanting, and what it may be which prevents our laying hold upon the comfort provided for the present distress. It frequently happens that our faith is defective because of slender knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know. My dear, tried friend, there is a promise in the Scriptures which would exactly meet your case, and if grasped by faith it would immediately cheer you, and you know nothing of its efficacy because you may never yet have read it, or, having read it, you may never have paused over it and considered its meaning, and so you are needlessly distressed; for your relief lies close at hand, and is easy of application. It may be that as yet you have not learned the whole circle of gospel doctrines, and this also deprives you of comfort. You have laid hold upon the vital and saving part of revelation, but the strengthening and exhilarating part of it you know not. You have fed

on the necessary bread of Christ's house, but not upon the luscious fruits of his garden. You have been in the field, but you have not walked in the garden to eat his pleasant fruits. Faith cannot believe what it does not know, and, therefore, you have missed fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well refined, which might have been your strength and your joy. We should all of us grow in comfort if we grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and had a more intelligent appreciation of the preciousness of the truths which he has revealed.

Faith may be defective through ignorance, and it may also be defective through a want of appreciation of the person of Christ. It was so in Martha's case; she did not know enough about her Lord to perceive his power to meet her sorrow. The apostle Paul says, in the passage which I just now quoted, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," as if the knowledge of Jesus were indeed the most important and gracious knowledge which a believer can obtain, and so it is. If we are but half instructed as to our Lord we shall be but half comforted. O mourners, ye have not rated the Saviour highly enough; ye have not yet a large enough idea of his love for you and of his design of infinite wisdom in permitting you to be afflicted.

If the Lord Jesus were better known our afflictions would be lightened, and our hearts would even rejoice in them. If we did but know thee, O thou blessed Christ, then if the same trials remained with us they would lose their gloom beneath thy smile, and we should even come to rejoice in them as ministering to our fellowship with thee in thy sufferings. Jesus known, sorrow loses its sting: surely even the bitterness of death is past.

It is not to be supposed that every true believer in Christ is assuredly a perfect believer. Martha truly believed in Jesus, but she did not perfectly believe in him. I do not know how many here have, or think they have, perfect faith: such good people will get very little from the discourse of this morning; but then, happily, they do not need it. Those of us who have an imperfect faith—and I suspect that this would describe most of us—may gather instruction from the Saviour's question to Martha: "Believest thou this?" May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so. Let us think we hear his loving lips enquiring of us at this time concerning this truth and the other,—"Believest thou *this*?" We desire to believe everything that is true, and we wish to receive into our minds every doctrine which the Holy Spirit has revealed, for we would perfect our discipleship, and is not this one of its privileges,—"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth"? We long to believe everything that is within the range of our spiritual knowledge, that so our faith taking the entire range of divine truth may be complete for every emergency, and mighty in every conflict. Submit, then, to a heart-searching enquiry as to your faith, and hear Jesus say by his Spirit, "Believest thou this?"

I. Our first head will be: BELIEVEST THOU THIS PARTICULAR DOCTRINE? I will not just now suggest any one doctrine above another, but merely advise your putting the question about every revealed truth. You, who are believers, have faith in the Scriptures in general; you can boldly declare that from the first word of Genesis to the last word of the Revelation, you believe all that is written in the inspired volume. Now the point is to take out of this general mass of things believed, or supposed

to be believed, each one separate item, and look it over in detail, and then say with your heart and conscience, "I believe this." It is easy to talk in the gross, and it is very easy to think that we have a vast amount of faith, and yet we may have little or none worth having. We may have put the treasure of truth into a bag that is full of holes, and so may have lost it as fast as we have found it. We may fancy that we embrace within our arms the whole of revealed truth, and yet when we come to a quiet examination of our soul we may find that much is slipping away from us by a process of questioning and doubt which we hardly dare acknowledge. Things believed and never used are like a sluggard's farm which lies fallow, and is never tilled; we hardly call such ground a farm, and can we call such belief real faith? Why, some truths taught in the word are not even known by numbers of professors, and we cannot believe what we do not know: it is the same case as that supposed in the apostle's question, "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" If we do not see the surface meaning, which is within our reach, we cannot be said to believe in any real sense.

Martha when our Saviour questioned her had already expressed her faith in certain great truths. She said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died": she believed in the Saviour's power to heal the sick. She believed that so long as her brother yet breathed the power of Christ could have kept him alive; for she was convinced that Jesus was master of disease, and could restore the suffering to health. This was something worthy of her faith, but it was not enough. Our Lord set a further fact before her, and asked, "Believest thou *this*?" It is for us to grow in knowledge, and to exercise faith in proportion as we do so.

Next, Martha believed that though her brother was dead, such was the efficacy of Christ's prayer that he could do something, she does not quite say what, to comfort the bereaved,—"I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She had faith in our Lord's prevalence with God in prayer, and that to an unlimited degree. She believed in Jesus as a mighty intercessor, one who had but to speak with the Most High and his request would surely be answered: this is a very commendable measure of faith; I wish that we all had as much. So much faith was something admirable, but it was not enough for her present comfort, and therefore Jesus puts before her a fact even more honourable to himself, and then adds, "Believest thou *this*?"

Martha also expressed her firm conviction as to the certainty of the general resurrection: "I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She had gathered this, doubtless, from the Old Testament Scriptures, and from the general belief amongst orthodox Hebrews. She may also have learned this master truth from the teaching of the Saviour himself. She was in this great fundamental doctrine a thoroughly sound believer, but she had not yet seen the resurrection in the Christian light, and perceived our Lord's connection with it. She had not yet learned enough to afford her comfort under her heavy loss; for it is clear that she derived very little consolation from the fact of a distant and general resurrection: she needed resurrection and life to come nearer home, and to become more a present fact to her.

Our Saviour points her to a truth concerning himself which would answer that purpose, and says to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou *this?*" Here was a well of comfort from which she had never drank, because, like Hagar in the wilderness, she had never seen the divine supply. Christ points her to it and asks her if she will not drink.

I would to God, dear friends, that all of us who call ourselves Christians would every now and then go over the Bible, and rehearse the great doctrines in order before our minds; stopping over each one of them, and saying to your heart and mind, "Believest thou this?" Take, for instance, that great and earliest of doctrines, the election of grace. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Pause over these texts, and consider their evident meaning, and then say to your own hearts, "Believest thou *this?*" Some believers in Christ do not attempt to accept this doctrine, but even call it horrible, and others speak of it as so mysterious and unpractical that it is not to be preached in public. I would invite such honestly to look the doctrine in the face, and see whether they do believe it or no; for if they do not, they may as well take a pen and cross out of the Word of God all passages which plainly teach it. They would not like to do this, and yet they do that which amounts to the same thing. When a man is afraid of a doctrine, or ashamed of it, he has grave cause to suspect that he does not believe it.

Take another grand truth: "A man is justified by faith, and not by the works of the law." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." The perfect pardon of the believer, the complete justifying power of the righteousness of Christ to them that believe, is plainly taught in the Bible,—"Believest thou *this?*" If thou dost, why dost thou go every day and perpetually call thyself a "miserable sinner," when thou art so no longer, but a blood-washed saint, and a happy child of God? Why dost thou talk about thy sin as if it were not forgiven, and speak of thyself as if thou wert still "an heir of wrath, even as others," whereas thou art justified in Christ Jesus, and accepted in the beloved? Look at the Scriptural truth and at thy conduct, and then say to thyself, "Believest thou this?"

Suppose you turn to the Scriptures, and read of the union of Christ to his people, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." "I am the vine, ye are the branches." When you thus read, enquire of your heart "Believest thou this?" Dost thou believe that all who live unto God are one with Christ? Dost thou believe this? If so, why art thou troubled as to thine acceptance with God, since thou art one with Christ? Why dost thou think that thou shalt ultimately perish if thou art one with him? Will Christ lose the

members of his body? Shall it be that one after another the limbs of his mystical frame shall rot away and die? Has he not said, "Because I live ye shall live also"? "Believest thou *this?*"

It may be that brethren will say of a certain truth that this is a high doctrine, or a mysterious doctrine, which seems almost too good to be true; but all this is wide of the mark. The one question is—Is it revealed? "King Agrippa," said Paul, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." So would I say to each one of you,—if you believe the prophets and the apostles, why do you not believe one by one those great truths which God has spoken by them? And if you believe them to be revealed how dare you cast a slur upon them, as being this, that, and the other? I will not ask you to believe my statement, nor the statements of theologians and divines, but turn to the infallible Book itself, and see what is there written, and then ask yourself, "Believest thou this?" As you meet with such and such a statement of holy writ do not cut it down nor cavil at it, nor twist it, nor try to see if some eminent commentator has not evaporated the very soul out of it, but believe it just as you find it, and if you cannot do so, stop until you can, and cry out to God for further light till you can, without hesitation, answer the Saviour's question, and say, with Martha, "Yea, Lord."

How this enquiry, well managed and pressed home, will enlarge the range of faith! How will it strengthen its grasp and hand-hold! How rich would our souls become! Upon what meat would our inward confidence be fed if we would but treasure up each crumb of revealed truth. Search the Scriptures and take the teaching of the Word of God in detail, line by line, and word by word, and say to your soul "Believest thou this?" Ask for an anointing from the Holy One that you may know all things and understand with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. There will be profit connected with this our first point if each one will conscientiously catechize his mind and say, "Believest thou this particular doctrine of the Word?"

II. Our next division shall be briefly handled. BELIEVEST THOU THIS DISTINCT DOCTRINE? I find, and especially among members of certain churches, great cloudiness as to their faith. I would not judge severely, but I notice that those converted persons who come to us from certain quarters, which I will not now name, believe the gospel, but it is too much after the manner of the collier in the old story. When he was asked, "What do you believe?" He answered, "I believe as the Church believes." He was then questioned, "But what does the Church believe?" He replied, "The Church believes what I believe." Being further asked, "And what do you and the Church believe?" he answered "We both believe the same thing." There was no getting further with him. Is not this kind of faith common enough at this day? Many who are called Christians have this blind faith and little more. This doting faith in you know not what is fitter for idiots than rational beings. Let those delight in it who are of slavish mind, or too idle to think for themselves; as for us, so long as we have eyes we shall not yield to walk blindfolded. We like a man to do his own thinking. Put your garments out to wash, if you please; but your thinking you should do at home. There is no reaching the land of truth unless you will work

his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." And then put it to yourself: Believest thou *this?* The very life and soul and sweetness of atonement will be found in the substitution of the innocent Saviour for the guilty sinner in the actual bearing of the penalty of sin, the real payment of the debt; for then I know that I am clear, because he, in my stead, has vindicated justice, honoured the law, and glorified God. Believest thou this? Dear friend, ask God to give thee grace that thou mayest believe in what Christ has taught, and what the prophets and the apostles have spoken, exactly as it was meant that thou shouldst believe it, not in a hap-hazard, unreal way, but with your whole heart, and soul, and mind, accepting God's word as it stands, in all its clearly cut lines and features. Have a quick and true answer to the question, "Believest thou this distinct and clear truth?" Answer, "Yea, Lord."

III. We will now go a little further, in the third place, to ask, "BELIEVEST THOU THIS DIFFICULT TRUTH?" Certain truths are hard to grasp. There are points about them which almost stagger faith till faith rises to her true character, and is no longer dwarfed into carnal reasoning; but these difficult things are to be believed. It was not easy for Martha to understand how the Lord Jesus could himself be the resurrection and the life, and yet her brother was dead. It was not an easy truth for her to believe, for it is not easy for us. How can he that died be life? How can he whose members are still in the grave be the resurrection? How can the Son of man have such a wonderful power that resurrection and life should be entirely dependent upon him? How can these things be? We know the fact, but we do not understand it. It is well for us if we do not want to understand it, but regard it as sufficient for us to believe what is revealed even though to our reason it may seem a fathomless deep.

Indeed, it was hard for Martha to believe her Lord to be the life, because it seemed contrary to her experience. "Though he were dead, yet shall he live;" she might hope that this was possible in the case of Lazarus; but then the Lord had said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." How could that be true? for Lazarus lived and believed in Jesus, and yet he had died. Her experience seemed to be contrary to Christ's statement, and this might have rendered it difficult to believe, and therefore the Lord said, "Believest thou *this?*"

But, my brethren, when we become Christians we cease to consider difficulties of belief, for we take the Scriptures upon divine authority and submit ourselves implicitly to their teaching. At any rate, I have done so. What the Church is to the Romanists, that the Bible and the Holy Spirit are to me. This done, no difficulty remains one-half so great as those which I have surmounted. I believed, first of all, that God was in Christ, that he who made the heavens and the earth came down below and took upon himself human nature, was born at Bethlehem, was cradled in a manger, and did suck his nourishment from a woman's breast: after having believed that I can believe anything. An incarnate God once accepted, no difficulty need stagger my faith. Martha's speech,—"I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"—proved her readiness

to believe all else that Jesus might teach. The incarnation, to begin with, without believing which a man can be no Christian at all, is so profound a mystery that other teachings are simple in its presence. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Once rejoice in the light of this which is the very daystar of hope to us, that God has taken into union with himself our human nature, and you are ready for all light. Only let me know that God says anything is true, that is enough for me. I do not quite join with the poor old woman in her words, but I agree with her spirit, who put her implicit faith in Scripture in the most unguarded way. When some one ridiculed her for believing that the whale swallowed Jonah, "Dear," said she, "if the word of God had said that Jonah swallowed the whale I should have believed it." Brethren, prostrate yourselves before the utterance of God. Not before man's dictum or dogma, not before the utterance of priest, presbyter, pastor, or philosopher, but before God, who cannot err, we prostrate our souls. In him you must place implicit faith. Let him say what he wills, we must believe it; and that not in one case or twenty, but in all that he saith. "Believest thou this?"—*this? this?* whatever it is. Yes, if it be indeed taught in infallible Scripture by the Holy Spirit of God, we believe it. If your faith does not rise to this mark, evil will happen to it. Our Lord one day said to a company of those who were his followers, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him." What followed? Read on. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." They said, "Can this man give us his flesh to eat?" and they came to the conclusion that it could not be, and deserted their teacher. Do we wish to do this? The Lord Jesus Christ at the very outset of his ministry prepares us to believe hard things. He bids us count the cost about this as well as everything else. Although we already believe certain mysteries, there are many more, that we do not know of as yet, which will in due course demand our faith. Did not Jesus say to Nicodemus when Nicodemus had been told of being born again, and that had staggered him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" As if even regeneration, which is really full of heavenliness, were but a common-place truth compared with what Nicodemus had yet to believe. If Nicodemus had said, "Good Master, I can go as far as this, but I reserve my judgment, and shall venture no further," then the ruler of the Jews and the Son of God would have parted, for he cannot be Christ's disciple who will not receive all Christ's words, let those words be what they may. Believest thou this, then? This difficult truth? I put this very earnestly to some of you, because it may be that at this moment you are in trouble from want of faith in a promise or a doctrine which seems hard to you. You have a promise, "When thou passest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Believest thou *this*, though all things appear to be consumed in the heat of thy affliction? It may be that you are under a peculiar cloud

and dense gloom, and yet Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" and, again, "Whosoever believeth me shall not abide in darkness." Believest thou this? Canst thou laugh at impossibility, and say it shall be done, for God hath said it? Knowest thou not that things impossible with men are possible with God? Can thy faith leap over the head of carnal reason? Can present circumstances and the deductions of thine own judgment all be waved aside by the left hand as thou sayest, "Let God be true and every man a liar"? If so thou hast the faith which will comfort and bless thee, but if not, like Martha, thou wilt be bowed down with sorrow, since thou hast not yet believed the truth which can cheer thee.

IV. Fourthly, to pass on: "Believest thou *this?*" that is, BELIEVEST THOU THIS TRUTH AS IT STANDS CONNECTED WITH JESUS? I called your attention just now to the fact that Martha believed that there would be a resurrection. "Ay," saith Christ, "but I am the resurrection; believest thou this?" Now it is one thing to believe doctrine, but it is another thing to believe that doctrine as it is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. "Believest thou *this?*" There the comfort lies: in believing the truth as you find it in him who is the truth. Martha was called upon to believe first in Christ's personal power. "The dead will rise." "True, Martha; but dost thou believe that *I* shall make them rise, that it is through me the dead shall live? Yea, that I am the life and resurrection. Dost thou believe that?" She was to believe, moreover, in his present power. Mark that. "Even now," saith Jesus, "*I am* the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." It is one thing to believe that Jesus *will* have power, at the last day, to raise the dead; but do we believe that he is even *now* the resurrection and the life? Oh the bliss of believing in the personal power of Christ and in the present power of Christ! Jesus, the I AM, says, "*I am* the resurrection and the life."

Moreover, she was called on to believe in the union of Christ with his people; that they are so one with him, that they are partakers of his life, that if they should come under the power of death they should be delivered out of it; and that being out of the power of death they shall never come under it: in Christ the dead shall live, the living shall not die. "Oh," saith one, "but I myself do not comprehend this, for I see good people die." Yes, you see what you think is death, but they do not truly die, they rise into a higher life. That which is the essence of death never touches believers,—they "depart out of the world unto the Father;" they go "to be with Christ, which is far better," but they do not *die*. Death as a penal sentence, in its innermost meaning, never comes near to those for whom Jesus has borne death upon the cross; his death, in their stead, is the death of death to them. Believest thou *this?*

Come now, let us each one say, do I really believe that Christ Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth? Do I worship him as God over all, blessed for ever? Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or even think? And when I come in prayer before God do I so

believe in Christ, that I remember his promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name *I* will give it you;" not the Father, but *I*. Even Christ himself will give you all things. Have you such a notion and idea of your Lord that you know that *he* can do all things for you now, and that in answer to your prayer *he* can grant you any blessing and save you out of any trouble and every trouble:—believest thou *this*? If thou dost not thou hast no right idea of Christ, for he is Lord of all. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ," and as such we do believe in thee, and trust thee, and find comfort in thy present, personal power!

V. We must now pass on to a fifth head. Believest thou this?—that is to say, BELIEVEST THOU THIS TRUTH WHICH IS APPLICABLE TO THYSELF NOW? That was the point with Martha, and this was the place wherein she fell short. She believed that all would rise. But Jesus virtually says,—"Believest thou that I am the resurrection and the life, because if it be so, I am able to raise thy brother at once. Believest thou this?" Now, observe, that we sometimes receive great truths and yet we are staggered by lesser truths, because, it may be, the great truth has no practical bearing upon us just now, while the present truth, though it be somewhat less in other respects, has a greater practical bearing upon ourselves and our condition. We doubt the promise most necessary to our comfort. For look, she believes that all will rise; well, then, it was a much smaller thing to believe that one would rise. She doubts whether Lazarus can rise because he is in the grave, yet she believes that millions upon millions will rise from the ground. Doubtless that was because of the distance of the time and the scene. Some such feeling must have operated on her mind, for the general resurrection is the greater difficulty. Is it hard to believe that Lazarus can rise who has been dead four days? Well, then, it is a great deal harder to believe that bodies can be quickened which have been dead several hundreds of years. Yet she did believe that the dead would rise at the resurrection at the last great day, not only those who were stinking, but those whose bodies had been dissolved by corruption and scattered by the four winds of heaven to the utmost ends of the earth. She believed the miracle on the grand scale; so she said; but when it came home to one person who had only been dead four days she could not believe it. She believed that there should be a general resurrection of all sorts of people; and yet, if that can be believed, it is much easier to expect that a favourite of Christ like Lazarus should rise. Jesus loved Lazarus; surely he will call him from the tomb, I say, she professed to believe the larger truth, and then she staggered at the less, because it was applicable to herself. I beg you to see whether you are not often walking in the same path. Yonder is a poor soul who believes that Jesus Christ can wash away all sin. Now, my dear friend, dost thou believe that he can wash thy sin away? That is the point, because all the sins of millions are much greater than thine can be, and if Jesus can take away the sin of so many, surely he can take away thine. Believest thou this? Wilt thou come and trust him for thyself? And thou, Christian, thou believest in general that all things work together for good to those who love God; dost thou believe that all thy ills, little and great, are working good for thee? Will that tooth-ache of thine work for thy good? Dost thou believe that yesterday's bad debt will work for good? Dost thou

believe that the death of thy child will work for good? You know it must be easier to believe that the events of one day will work for good than to believe that all things in the world throughout life will do so; and yet it may be you are staggered at your present trials, and you confess your misgivings. Have you faith in everything but that which would comfort you? Have you everything but the special requirement of the hour? How odd! How sad! The carpenter needs to drive a nail, and he has all his tools with him except his hammer! What is he to do? What is the good of all his other tools? If you can believe everything except the truth which would cheer you at this present moment, you are depriving yourself of comfort and strength. Believest thou this present promise, given for this very day? The Lord hath said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Believest thou *this?* "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Believest thou *this?* "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." Believest thou *this?* God's word is as the tree of life which yields its fruit every month. What a blessing to take the fruit from the tree of life in its month just when it is ripest and fullest of flavour. He hath said, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart." Since you delight in him he will hear your prayer, and give you the light of his countenance. "Believest thou *this?*"

VI. The last point shall be this: BELIEVEST THOU THIS PRACTICAL TRUTH? Martha said that she believed it; but her after acts did not prove it. She comprehended the belief in the Lord's word in her declaration, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." But yet she did not believe so as to act on the belief. Coleridge says, "Truths, of all others, the most awful and mysterious, and at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors." How true is the remark, Do you not know people who are better than their creed? Why is that? Why, for the very same reason that many people are worse than their creed, because their creed is asleep, and is not operating upon them: they believe as though they did not believe. This is a poor imitation of faith. There is at this moment a house on fire in London. I will suppose that I know the fact, and tell you of it, and you believe it. But what do you care? Not one of you stirs. Ay, but if you saw the engine hurrying along the street and believed that your own house was blazing, I warrant you you would bestir yourselves. Your belief would come a little more home to you as your own concern. So there are certain truths which do not seem to concern us to any high degree, at least for the present. They are true and important, but they operate no more upon us than if they were fictions. Martha says she believes in Jesus as the resurrection and the life; yet what is her action? Christ commands the bystanders to take away the stone from the sepulchre, and she interposes with her cry, "Lord, by this time he stinketh!" She fears the obnoxious consequences of uncovering such a mass of corruption, though he who is the resurrection and the life stands at the grave's mouth. Ah! Martha, where is thy faith in him? Dear heart, she says that she believes in Jesus as the resurrection and the life, and yet she is afraid that her brother will not

rise though the Mighty One stands there to raise him. Is she not just like you and me? We believe that God hears prayer, and therefore we pray; but if the Lord desires to surprise us he has only to answer our requests. I have seen God's children running with vast astonishment to tell their friends, "Here is a wonderful thing! Oh, such a marvellous event has happened to me! I offered a prayer and God has heard me." An amazing thing that God should do as he said he would! They put these things in books as marvels, and call the volume "*Remarkable* Answers to Prayer." Dear me, is it remarkable that it is cold when it freezes? Do we speak of the remarkable warmth of the sun's beams at midsummer? Is it remarkable that the fires in our houses should warm us when we put our hands to them? Is he a remarkable God because he says he will hear prayer and does it? An answer to prayer should be remembered with gratitude, and yet it should regarded as the most natural thing in all the world that our heavenly Father should fulfil his promises to his children. It is a great wonder that God should promise, but not a wonder that he should perform. It is marvellous that God should promise to hear prayer, but no wonder at all that when he has promised to do so he is as good as his word.

Brethren, we are to a great degree unpractical in other respects also, and we may take up many and many a truth that we do not act upon and say to our heart, "Believest thou *this?*" Might I not step outside the door this morning, and putting my hand upon a fainting believer as he left the house say, "Believest thou thy God?" Thou sayest, "I am so faint in spirit that I shall utterly fall and perish at the last." But the Lord hath said, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Believest thou *this?* I might go to another who is sighing and crying because of his poverty, and say to him, "God hath said, 'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Believest thou *this?*" What would the complainer say? How could he reconcile his discomfort and his murmuring with his belief in the comforting promise?

My brethren, let us, then, go over these matters with our souls. We call ourselves believers, but are we believers at all? If it be so that one after another we doubt the precious things of God when they come before us in detail, where is our faith? Let us entreat our God to grant us grace that we may put our finger on this doctrine, on that promise, and on the other assurance, and say of each one, "Lord, I believe *this*, and I believe *this*, and I believe *this*: for I believe whatsoever thou sayest in thy Word, and I know that it shall be even as thou hast told me." God bless you, beloved, and be ever with you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xi. 1—46.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—313, 841, 844.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

"And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."—Zechariah iv. 1—3; 12—14.

THE prophet, as he tells us in the introduction to his vision, had to be awakened by the angel as one is awakened out of his sleep. His mind was dull and heavy; perhaps he was weary and worn. Do you not often feel a similar lethargy, from which you need to be roused before your minds are equal to the study of those truths which God is revealing to your souls? May it not then be well, at the commencement of our meditation, to pray the Lord to waken us as a man is wakened out of his sleep? A divinely mysterious power can brood over us and quicken us out of languor. Have you never felt it? "Or ever I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." I had been slow before, but when the Spirit came, then was fulfilled that ancient proverb, "Draw me, and I will run after thee." The touch of the Holy Spirit makes our faculties strong, our powers of thought are greatly enlarged, and we get the key of mysteries which we never had been able to unlock before. Come, blessed Spirit, then, to each one of thy slumbering children at this good hour, and arouse us, that we may see what thou wouldst set before us. Like young Samuel, whom thou didst call in his sleep, we would each one heartily say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Beloved friends, we live in a world which is naturally shrouded in darkness. The "prince of this world," "the prince of the power of the air" is a dark spirit loving ignorance and sin. This darkness hovers over all the world as it did over Egypt: a darkness that might be felt is upon the souls of men. We sometimes fear that this gloom will thicken into an awful midnight. When we mix up with men in the

ordinary avocations of life, and hear their profane language; when we see the angry passions, the earthly propensities, and the worldly policies that prevail among people who are held in repute among their fellow-creatures, if we are children of God ourselves we cannot fail to be distressed that the world should still be so benighted and so destitute of that knowledge which purifies the heart. Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed since the blessed feet of our divine Master touched this globe, and yet it still smokes beneath the hoof of the wicked one. The sun has risen on this Egypt, and yet a miserable midnight covers the guilty people. We are apt, therefore, to become somewhat desponding, lest the light of the knowledge of God should gradually wane, till at length it shall utterly die out. What, then, would become of the world? If the one golden candlestick were taken out of its place, if those who are the light of the world should all be removed, and if the sure word of prophecy, which is like unto a light that shineth in a dark place, should become extinct, what then would be the horrible darkness?

Now, I think the vision of Zechariah may remove all fear on that score. Rest ye well assured that the pharos which God hath lighted to guide men across the boisterous sea and preserve them from the peril of eternal shipwreck shall have its lamps trimmed throughout all time. Until the "Sun of righteousness" shall rise, that lantern shall never go out, for the Lord will take care that the light shall still shine notwithstanding all that the powers of darkness may do or devise to extinguish it. This one thought I beseech you so to grasp that it may strengthen your faith and comfort your hearts: the light of God's grace has been kindled never to be quenched. To this end I invite your attention to the interesting parable contained in the marvellous vision which Zechariah the prophet beheld and described.

I. First, turn aside and see this great sight. Look, I beseech you, at THE WONDERFUL LAMP WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED TO LIGHT THE SONS OF MEN. "He said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to his seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof." Here is a candlestick that must challenge the notice of all who gaze at it, for it is of costly material and curious form, the work of wisdom, fitted for the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. It resembles the candlestick whose pattern Moses received from God, and yet in some respects it differs therefrom, as we shall see.

The object is scarcely more remarkable than its position. Note that *it stood in the open.* Under the old covenant the candlestick stood within curtains where only priestly eyes might see it: from the mass of the people it was hidden. We are very apt to think that, because the Jewish ritual was full of symbols, the worship of the people must have been of so materialistic a character that there was little or nothing to raise the soul to spiritual adoration of the invisible One. But it was not so: to the average Israelite there was little more of symbol than to us. Although it is true that within the holy place there were many symbols, yet there were very few of God's people who ever saw one of them, and most probably we ourselves know far more about the types than the Jews

did. The worship was not visible to the camp, for it was within nclosed space; and when the people were settled in Canaan the actual ıle area could only hold a few of the vast multitudes who in- ted the land. Within the holy place of all, the "Holy of Holies," nan ever entered except the high-priest, and he but once in the , so that they who worshipped God in the further parts of Palestine d for the most part not even see the Tabernacle or the Temple, and ı they did go up to Jerusalem they rather believed that the symbols inside behind the veil than enquired for the furniture and sacred ɛls as if they might be allowed to inspect them. Their worship had of the visible about it than we are apt to imagine: for most of the ɛrial emblems were simply certified to them by testimony, and not rwise verified to their senses.

hen, as if to let us know that the light of God did not yet fully shine ng men, and that the fulness of grace and truth had not been yet ıled, seeing Christ had not come, the seven-branched golden candle- stood out of sight of the mass of the people, shut in within the ains, enclosed within the holy place. But the lamp which Zechariah was in the open air; about this we are quite clear, because he saw olive trees growing, one on each side of it. It was, therefore, in pen space. To-day, beloved, "the veil of the temple is rent in n." What was mystery before has become plain to us now. Now ee Jesus, and, seeing Jesus, we behold a light such as never greeted ɛyes of prophets and kings. Though they longed to behold it they without the sight. Let us take care that we keep this lamp in the ı: do not let us suffer anyone to shut it up. Let the gospel be ched plainly to the masses of the people. Let the adorable name of s Christ be proclaimed in your street corners. In every place where can have access to the sons of men let it be known that there is ıtion in none other, but by him all that believe shall obtain the for- ness of sins. Some would cover up the golden lamp with ceremonial rvances, and others would hide it away under philosophical quibbles theological jargon; but be it yours to be a "city set on a hill cannot be hid," and what is said to you in secret that speak ye in light: what you learn in closets that publish ye aloud upon the house- . Lift up the beacon that it may flame afar all over the land and ss the sea: let the blaze of gospel light flare out till dwellers in the ost parts of the earth shall ask, "What is this light? From whence ı it come?" and you shall answer, "It is the candlestick of the Lord hidden amongst the peculiar people, but now set out before the ons in Christ Jesus; once concealed under type and emblem, but made manifest by him who speaketh no more by parable, but th us plainly of the Father."

ote, next, that it was *a lamp of pure gold.* This is a fact of much ificance. We are emphatically told that it was a "candlestick all of ." The major vessels of the tabernacle were all of gold, and this I k indicates that the lamp which God has kindled is of the most ious kind. The church, which may be said to represent this candle- , is as God hath made it, of pure gold. Those who are united ther in the fellowship of the church of God on earth should be a holy le, precious in the sight of the Lord, as gold is precious among metals.

There should be no admixture of dross and tin, no careless reception of carnal men and mere formalists, but those who are elect of God, precious in his sight, and honourable. God's chosen should be choice men. The lamp which holds the golden light should itself be of gold. The Lord will not use an unholy church to be his light-bearer, and where there is an apostasy as to doctrine, an absence of spiritual life, or a defection as to holiness of conduct, he will not use such a church, lest his holy name be polluted among men. His candlestick is all of pure gold; his people are a "peculiar people," "sanctified unto himself," "zealous of good works." If any who seem to be religious delight themselves in sin, if they fail in purity, they have no power to give light; and because of their depravity they are as spots in our solemn feasts, and mists that dim the brightness of our shining. Ungodly churches are not the candles of the Lord. If men find pleasure in unrighteousness, they exert an influence baneful as the shadow of death. How can light shine from them while they serve the prince of darkness? What a mercy it is that God hath set up a church in the world, which shall bear testimony to his name, and shall scatter the light abroad, because his grace makes and keeps it "holiness unto the Lord"! Let us love the church of God. We must never think that any one congregation, or any thousand congregations, can comprise the whole of that church. It is not for us to say, "The temple of the Lord are we." God forbid. He has a people scattered up and down throughout the whole earth; he has a remnant even amongst churches which err from the faith, who still have kept their garments unspotted from the world, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels." Let us pray for the church militant, the entire body of his elect, the redeemed of the Lord, the quickened of the Spirit, the called out ones, the true *ecclesiæ*, the assemblies of the Lord; for these are they that are his candlesticks, standing in the open as a "city set upon a hill that cannot be hid," holding forth the word of life, that all who see the church in its life, and the church in its testimony, may behold the light of God.

This wonderful candlestick, all of gold, you will observe, is *lit with golden oil*. Such is the expression used in our text. At the twelfth verse, we read, "Which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves." The quality of the oil is, doubtless, here commended, for I suppose it means the very best possible oil, of a rich golden colour, and in value, in splendour, in purity, and in clearness excellent beyond all praise. This represents that precious doctrine, that golden truth, that fulness of gospel grace which keeps alive the light of the church of God. Or may it not remind us of the Divine Spirit, who, coming into his church, and imparting to her the golden oil of his graces and gifts, enables her to maintain her brilliance of testimony, and to scatter her light among the sons of men. The Holy Spirit is also the flame by which the oil is kindled and made to burn and give its light: and thus we have truth on a blaze with sacred fervour, sound doctrine united with intense zeal, and all because the Spirit of truth is present and reveals himself at the same time as the Spirit of power. We will say of this golden oil that it is the truth, the living and incorruptible word of God. This is the oil which the church must burn, and with this she must trim her lamps. No strange doctrines, no vain

traditions, no scientific conjectures, no poetical reveries, no thoughts of men, no excogitations of human brains, but the revealed Word of God, the truth as Jesus Christ has given it to us, the truth as the Holy Ghost has revealed it in the sacred Book, the truth as he brings it home with divine power to our understanding and conscience. This it is that we must use, and we must take care that if we have it we empty it out of ourselves into the golden pipes, that they may never be without sacred oil to keep the flame alive. Precious beyond all conception is the truth! God will not be served with falsehood, but in truth is his delight. Take care that you bring nothing here but the best of the best, nothing but the unadulterated olive oil of revelation. What blunders and mistakes we make in the management of our own business! Should not this make us very careful in doing the work of the Lord that we do it not in a slovenly manner, and so provoke him to anger. Dear brothers and sisters, I hope we desire to be clean before God as to his truth. I pray you not to trifle with it. Never tack with the wind of public opinion, but watch if need be while the world lasts, and wait for the fulfilment of God's word, and be sure that it shall surely come to pass. Though you may well be tolerant of error in others, since you are so liable to it yourselves, yet be jealous of your own hearts, and keep out of them every false doctrine. "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." If there be any adulteration of the oil the lamps will burn out dimly, peradventure they will go out.

This golden lamp *shone with a sevenfold brightness.* There were seven lamps to this golden candlestick, and there were seven pipes to the seven lamps; and as some read it, there were seven pipes to each one of these lamps, so that it gave seven times the light that the old lamp of the temple ever gave. The suggestion has been hazarded that there were seven times seven pipes, and the Hebrew might allow of such a translation. At any rate there was seven times more light given by this mystic lamp seen by Zechariah than had ever been given by the candlestick of the old dispensation. God has given us light enough to flood the world with day in the generous gospel that is preached among all nations.

The light of the law all but blinded the dim eyes of the Jew, but oh, the light of the gospel! How it has sometimes overpowered all our senses! Saul of Tarsus tells us that when about noon, suddenly there shone a great light round about him, he fell to the earth. So, too, many of us can testify, that when the glory of God in the salvation of a lost sinner first flashed upon our souls we were so amazed that no strength remained in us. "Dissolved by his goodness we fell to the ground, and slept to the praise of the mercy we found." Overpowering was the effect when the brilliance of gospel light beamed upon our weak eyes at first, and even now, though the Lord hath strengthened our spiritual sight, so that we rejoice in the light, it is still at times more than we can bear. What a glory it has! Vain men ask us to delight ourselves with the sparks they have kindled! Let it suffice that our light renders all the flashes of natural joy things too dim to notice. They tell us of something new they have thought out. To their apprehension, no doubt, it seems very wonderful. They may strike their matches and light their candles, if they will: we are more than satisfied with the eternal sun. You may bring your ancient lamps from Rome; you may fetch your

tapers from Oxford and the Anglican imitators of Rome, but the lamp which the Holy Ghost hath kindled by the Divine Word is better than all the glare of antichrist. This despised book has seven times more light than all the Solons of antiquity or all the *savans* of modern times. There is none like it. Only have eyes to see it, and you shall rejoice in this light. It is the light of God himself. Spread it then if you have it, and let it shine in your families; let it shine on the town or city where you dwell; let it shine all over the earth; for there is no such light as the light of the eternal gospel, "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Oh that all saw it, and loved it, and lived in it.

II. Thus have I spoken about the wonderful lamp. Now, I ask those of you who love the study of God's word to follow me a little in considering the description that is given of THE COMPLETE MACHINERY, THE PERFECT APPARATUS, PROVIDED FOR THIS LAMP. If you notice, it was a "Candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." We do not read anything about pipes and bowls in the old temple lamp. I suppose that each one of its seven lights had to be fed distinctly and separately by the officiating priest with a separate portion of oil; but in this case there seems to have been a bowl at the top of the seven branches into which the golden oil first entered, and from which it flowed out again, and thus each of the branch lights was fed. At any rate, you see that a complete apparatus was provided and is described. The details are given. The pipes, bowl, and so on were all arranged with exquisite precision. Correspondingly in the church of God we ought to pay much attention to detail. I do not think we look to it half as much as we should. If the lamps are to be kept trimmed, you must attend to the pipes, and you must see to the golden oil. We ought each man to think, "Now, I have something to do to keep this candlestick in proper order; I have something to do with keeping this lamp burning." One man may be compared, as it were, to the bowl because he yields much of the light of intelligence and instruction, communicating knowledge and counsel to the church of God; another is a pipe to the Sunday-school; and yet another golden pipe runs to the young men's class; one is a pipe to the poor and ignorant in the streets, another to the sick, another is a golden pipe to those who are at home with their families. There is some point to which each one in Christ's church may help to conduct the golden oil to keep the blessed flame of truth ever burning in this dark world. I want you, brethren and sisters, to look one and all of you after the details of church work. Especially in a church of such magnitude as this, with such a multiplicity of agencies, attention to detail is most requisite. What can one overseer do? What could twenty pastors do? It is impossible if you leave this work entirely to us that it will ever be properly discharged. Oh no. Let each member have its own office in the body, even as each pipe had its own oil to carry to the one light of the candlestick which it had to supply. Do not get out of your place, do not interfere with other people's service; do your own work, and see that it is well done, and then look over all the church and pray the Lord to supervise the whole,

so that the golden bowl and the golden pipes may all be in full operation.

Of this machinery which is thus mentioned in detail there seems to have been an abundance. If there were seven pipes to each one of the lights of the lamp (and I think it was so), there could have been no lack of service. So, beloved friends, we must mind that the church in her machinery is ever kept abundantly supplied. We ought not to be slack in our labours nor scanty in our equipments. The everlasting gospel should be promulgated with great energy and varied service. Little oil will mean little light; little grace will mean little work for God and little glory to his blessed name. But let us endeavour to make every arrangement more effective. The light might not be extinguished even in one pipe: to the completeness of the divine design every light must be in good order. Be it our aim to keep the seven pipes constantly flowing and feeding so as to convey a sevenfold measure of oil, that the light may burn steadily on from hour to hour till the Lord comes.

This apparatus still further suggests to us *the idea of unity*. As I have already said, there were seven distinct lights to the old lamp of the Jewish sanctuary, and these could be individually filled; but here they are all one. One bowl is filled with oil, and from it the oil runs down the pipes to each of the lights. So is there unity in the church. We all suffer if one suffers; we are all the better if one is in a prosperous condition. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Though I speak of myself now as a fool, yet, it is true, if I decline in grace I injure all of you more or less, and you also in some measure exert a like influence upon me, though not to the same extent, because you do not occupy the same public station. Every member of the church who grows poor in grace impoverishes all the rest in some degree. We act and react upon each other. I am sure the preacher can do injury to the hearer, and the hearer can in measure injure the preacher. Let your grace decline, and your prayerfulness be restrained, and the pastor must feel the loss, and his ministry will bear melancholy evidence that the Spirit of God is not witnessing mightily amongst us. So instead of one enriching the other we may by sinful neglect mutually endanger our prosperity; nay, we may beggar each other, and become partners in destitution and distress. May it never be so with us, but may we ever prove ourselves to be a warm-hearted, loving, prayerful people, who are so glowing ourselves that we warm up those that are cold, and kindle fresh life in those that are expiring. Then if the whole congregation be consecrated to God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ gladdens them all, and they are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the minister can never be dull and drowsy; his heart will be aglow with sacred fervour, and his preaching will be resplendent with divine light and fire. The pews will respond to the pulpit. Fire will kindle to a flame, and the flame will kindle fresh fire. Vitality will promote revival; our tone will be spirited and inspiriting. A breath from the four winds will make a stir among the dry bones, and an army shall presently arise. The force of sympathy shall be felt; and by free commerce in all holy gifts our commonwealth will flourish. Oh, may it be so. I know it is desirable, and I feel that it will be attained. Nor is it merely for one church we are

thus anxious: all the churches need the same consecration. If one church is dull it injures other churches. All the churches of Jesus Christ are really one, and, as even my little finger cannot be ailing without my head suffering in consequence, so even the smallest church in the most remote village cannot decline without the entire body of the faithful, whether it be known to themselves or not, being losers thereby. Look ye well then to every portion of the apparatus of this golden lamp: watch its details; keep it well trimmed and abundantly supplied; remember its unity, for with all its many pipes it is but one candlestick.

III. But the most remarkable disclosure in this vision was THE MYSTERIOUS SUPPLY BY WHICH THESE LAMPS ARE KEPT BURNING.

There were no priests to trim these lamps, nor is mention made of anyone being appointed to keep them in order. No golden snuffers nor golden snuff-dishes were used; nor was any oil brought by any living man to replenish them. That is remarkable. Moreover there is no mention of oil being given by the people. The lamp in the temple was fed by the offerings of the people; they brought the best oil to keep the lamp perpetually burning before the altar. There is nothing of the kind here: that is not the way by which this oil gets to the lamp in the vision before us. Neither by priest nor people is it supplied. But how, then? Why simply by a natural process, without any machinery; for there are two olive branches: "Two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof"; and these trees in this vision empty the golden oil out of themselves through the two golden pipes, and so the marvellous lamp is kept supplied. It is a very singular picture which is now before you, oil flowing directly from the living tree and at once creating light. Ordinarily, when the olive tree yields its berries, they must be taken to the mill and ground before oil can be produced. I have gone into the olive mill myself and seen the great stones crushing the berries, and I have seen the other processes by which the olive oil is prepared for the lamp; but there is no mention here of any mill, or press, or strainer, or jar, or bottle of oil. The food of this light does not come in that way at all; but the tree grows, and, in a mysterious way imparts its fatness to the bowl of the pipe, and in this way the flame is fed. Thus we are shown that the light of God is not dependent upon human will or human skill. It is an apt illustration of the text we were reading just now which lights up the whole chapter. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Not by your grinding out your oil by laboriously turning the mill of study, nor by your contributions of wealth, nor by your eloquence and logic, but by divine agency shall living men be raised up, and through these living men shall come the wondrous golden oil of grace, by which the lamp of testimony shall be kept bright, and the darkness of the world shall be overcome.

At first sight the provision may appear to be inadequate to the purpose. For God to make two olive trees grow by the side of the candlestick seems at first to be a deficient arrangement, because the trees stand out so separate from the lamp that we cannot perceive any connection between them. Had I beheld that vision as the prophet saw it I feel I should have been as perplexed as he was. I should have said, "What be these?" I could not have made it out. Two olive

ees growing by the side of a candelabrum! What connection can ıere be between them and it? But that is the very pith of the sion. You are to be shown the unique manner in which the Lord ɛeps his church burning and shining without mechanism. He simply ıises up chosen men, perhaps only two, sometimes more, who live ıd grow, and in their life and growth they bring forth, by God's race, as from their very souls, the sacred truth, the holy oil with hich the lamp of God is kept burning. I suppose that the two ive trees represent in this case Joshua, the high priest, of whom e read that his filthy garments were taken away, and he was ɔothed with change of raiment; and Zerubbabel, of whom we read ı this chapter that his hands had laid the foundation, and his hands ıould finish the house. These were the two men whom God strengthened nd enabled to set up a standard because of the truth. The Lord ualified them to build the temple that he might be glorified therein. 'hose two men by divine grace carried out the Lord's design, moving ıe people to the sacred service. Joshua was made the ruler and ɛacher of the people, and Zerubbabel was promised that his hands ıould lay the top stone, as his hands had laid the foundation of the ɛmple; and this, too, when Judah's lamp burned dim and her light 'as well-nigh gone out. These two, though they were nothing in ıemselves but godly men, who like living trees brought forth fruit nto God, should be the means, according to the appointment of God, f keeping up the sacred testimony so long as they lived. Such means ertainly appear insignificant in comparison with the magnificent result ɔ be achieved. But that is God's way of working. He generally works y ones or twos, and when he uses two he couples them well. In the ıissions of the Lord's ordaining we observe Moses and Aaron, Caleb nd Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, 'alvin and Luther, Whitefield and Wesley. Foolish persons rail at a ne-man ministry, but what can they say against a two-men ministry? 'o the end of time there will be two witnesses; representative men 'ill rise in pairs and do the work of the Lord, so as to arouse the whole hurch. Little as the world may think of them at the time, men do rise whose influence wonderfully displays the power of God, for they re made to stand like olive trees, and by some mysterious means it is hrough them that the lamp of God is kept burning continuously.

Of these two men I want you to notice two things. You wonder ow it is that God should speak of them as keeping the lamp burning. Ie does so speak of them, for he says, "These are the two anointed nes, which stand by the Lord of the whole earth." First remember hat they are able to do this because they stand before the Lord of the 'hole earth. Those whom God chooses to do his work stand as his ɛrvants in his sight: they could do nothing of themselves or by themɛlves, but their testimony comes from God, and their unction is of he Holy One, and they are clothed with divine energy, otherwise hey would be weak as the rest of their brethren. Then be sure of this, hat they have been anointed: they are said to be "anointed ones." Ve have no power to pour forth oil till we have been ourselves nointed: it is not possible that we should feed the holy light until God as wrought in us the will of his own good Spirit. These men are said

to have been filled with the Spirit of God, according to the sixth verse: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." There is Joshua; you can see him; he is clad in filthy garments! Is this the Lord's high priest? Is this he that is to instruct the people, the man who wears garments that are old, and soiled, and foul? Yes, that is the man. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," and my Spirit shall rest upon this poor Joshua, this brand plucked out of the burning, and he shall teach my people. There is the other man over yonder—Zerubbabel. He is a poor, timid creature. It is the day of small things with him; he has but little confidence. God has to chide him and say, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" But he is the man before whom the mountain shall become a plain; he is the man that shall build the temple of the Lord, because the Spirit of God shall be upon him,—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." You will always find that when God chooses men to do his work he makes it palpable to everybody that they are nothing but men. Sometimes they have imperfections over which we mourn very much, and over which they mourn far more than we do; but these manifest tokens of their infirmity show more distinctly the infinite skill of him who uses such poor instruments. The frailty of the earthen vessels is made evident, that the excellency of the power which is of God and not of them may be the more conspicuous. So it is with God's work, for he will have it known that it is not by charm of eloquence, nor by force of reasoning, but by his Spirit, that he operates with resistless power; so he taketh men, poor humble men, that seem no more able to trim the golden lamp than two olive trees would be, and he works by them to the praise of the glory of his grace. Yet these men must be full of faith. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." I doubt not that Zerubbabel grasped that promise, relied upon it, and rejoiced in it, and proved himself to be a man of faith. God will use us, whatever our faults are, if we have faith. I do not know what use he could make of any man who has no faith. Read the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, and notice on what strange men God set the seal of his approbation, because they had faith. Samson may be quoted as an extreme case: speaking after the manner of men, we might have thought that God would have set him aside altogether, because there were such serious flaws in his character. Yet he was a great child-man, who, with all his faults, did believe in God, and perhaps believed more in God than many who were far better than he in other respects. With a thousand foemen before him, only think of that one man daring, through his confidence in God, to fling himself upon them all, with no weapon except a poor ass's jawbone. See, he leaps upon the crowd. "Heaps upon heaps. With the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." He never counted the odds. He just went at it, believing that God would help him, however tremendous the struggle might be. So when they put him, blind as he was, into that huge temple of the Philistine gods, where everything was so strong and massive that it could bear up all the Philistine lords up there in the gallery, he begins feeling for the pillars: this poor blind man, whose hair had been shorn, and who had been made a prisoner by his bitter adversaries, feels for the huge

olumns, believing that God would enable him to snap them like eeds, or rock them to or fro as bulrushes. Oh what a desperate and lorious tug was that! What a transcendent act of faith when he bowed imself with all his might, and pulled the structure down upon the eads of his oppressors! A glorious faith animated him. He was a oor specimen of propriety in many respects: queer stuff he was made f; but there was grandeur in his faith, and that saved him. O my ear brother, if thou canst believe God, God can use thee, but if thou ast no faith, or if thou hast but a weak, trembling faith, thine unbelief ill hinder the Lord, and it will be said of thee, "God could not do nany mighty works by him, because of his unbelief." Oh, if we could elieve more implicitly, and venture to act more unreservedly on the ertainty of the covenanted promises, what exploits we might achieve. The limit of our usefulness is narrowly set by our want of confidence in od. If we had more faith, the harvests we reap, which yield tenfold, night yield fiftyfold, or a hundredfold. With more faith the weakest of is might be as David, and David would be as the angel of the Lord. od grant us his grace that we may so believe, and rely upon his sure ord that we may become men fit for his use and profitable for his ervice.

One thing more is prominent and unmistakable about these men—hese olive-tree men—that fed the lamp and kept it burning,—they scribed all their success to grace, for it is said that when the top stone f the temple should be brought out there should be shoutings of 'Grace, grace, unto it." If souls are saved, it is always by a ministry f grace. Whatever else is left out in a soul-saving testimony there must e a clear ring as to grace. Election by the grace of the Father, regenera-ion by the grace of the Holy Ghost, remission of sins by the grace of od through the atoning blood of Jesus: grace beginning, continuing, nd perfecting. I like the word "grace" even when it is coupled with n adjective and spoken of as "sovereign grace," "free grace," "effectual race"; and all those whom God will bless must be men that love his race, and feel his grace, and preach his grace; for this is the very ssence of the golden oil by which the lamp is trimmed.

These men, or rather these trees, emptied out the golden oil "out of hemselves." They did not make the golden oil; it came into them by he miraculous power of God: the process was beyond nature. Men annot create grace any more than trees could prepare oil of themselves.)live trees cannot distil oil without a press, nor can men be the means f grace to others unless God shall cause them so to be and then they mpty out themselves to a good and gracious purpose.

Well, dear brethren, if you want to know how to be useful, one of the hings that is absolutely necessary is that you empty yourselves out. Do ou expect to give anything to another without losing it yourself? You ill be mistaken. Take it as a general rule that nothing can come out f you that is not in you, and as a next general rule that it takes some-ning out of you to give something to other people. Paul said he did not ierely wish to impart the gospel to the people, but himself also. Though e did not preach himself, yet he was willing to spend and be spent so ng as he could bring souls to Christ. I believe the difference between ie result of the labour of one man and another is often this, that one

gives more out from himself than another. I am acquainted with some very learned brethren of mine who do not feed many people. They are huge barrels of learning, like the Heidelberg tun, and they are full to the brim with the best liquor in the world, but never much comes out. On the other hand, I have never myself been anything but a very small kilderkin, but I let everything run out that is put into me. If you have not ten talents to boast of, turn the one talent you have over and over and over and over again; and you will make far more of it than if you let many talents lie still and rust. Take care that you are actively earnest in the cause of the Master, and a blessing will surely come out of it.

Oh how it shows the wisdom of God, and the power of God, when he makes simple means produce surprising results; and by feeble instruments compasses his infinite forethoughts. God might have been glorified by doing the work himself, as when of old he stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, speaking and it was done. But he is far more glorified by using poor, unworthy creatures for the accomplishment of his divine purposes. When Quintin Matsys made the celebrated well-cover, at Antwerp, it would have been highly creditable to him even if he had used the best of implements to make it with. When we are told, however, that his fellow workmen robbed him of his tools, and that he did it with one common hammer or some such instrument, our estimation of the artist's skill is greatly enhanced. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God can himself convert souls, the wonder is that he converts men by us. That we who are so imperfect, and so feeble, should become channels of blessing is a great marvel. Those two olive trees might, it was feared, grow in the way of the light, but God made them to be its maintainers. The branches of our infirmity might hide the light from the people's eyes if grace did not intervene and make every one of them yield its olives, and pour out its measure of oil for the supply of the golden candelabrum.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, if you have light, shed it; if you have grace, endeavour to impart it. The Lord has blessed you, ask him to bless you more by his Holy Spirit. Let those olive trees, yielding abundance of oil, be your model, that your lively vigour may prove of lasting value to the church. So be the Lord with you henceforth and for ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zechariah iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—972, 969, 971.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."—Luke xix. 41.

ON three occasions we are told that Jesus wept. You know them well, but it may be worth while to refresh your memories. The first was when our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He saw the sorrow of the sisters, he meditated upon the fruit of sin in the death and corruption of the body, and he groaned in spirit, and it is written that "Jesus wept." Those who divided the chapters did well to make a separate verse of that simple sentence. It stands alone, the smallest and yet in some respects the greatest verse in the whole Bible. It shines as a diamond of the first water. It contains a world of healing balm condensed into a drop. Here we have much in little: a wealth of meaning in two words. The second occasion we have before us, and we will make it the theme of our discourse: at the sight of the beloved but rebellious city Jesus wept. The third occasion is mentioned by the apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he tells us what else we might not have known, that the Saviour "in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." That passage relates to the Gethsemane agony, in which a shower of bitter tears was mingled with the bloody sweat. The strength of his love strove with the anguish of his soul, and in the process forced forth the sacred waters of his eyes.

Thus our Saviour wept in *sympathy with domestic sorrow*, and sanctified the tears of the bereaved. We, too, may weep when brothers and friends lie dead, for Jesus wept. There need not be rebellion in our mourning, for Jesus fully consented to the divine will, and yet he wept. We may weep at the graves of those we love, and yet be guiltless of unbelief as to their resurrection, for Jesus knew that Lazarus would rise again, and yet he wept. Our Lord, in weeping over Jerusalem, showed his *sympathy with national troubles*, his distress at the evils which awaited his countrymen. Men should not cease to be patriots when they become believers; saints should bemoan the ills which come upon the

guilty people among whom they are numbered, and do so all the more because they are saints. Our Lord's third weeping was induced by *the great burden of human guilt* which pressed upon him. This shows us how we, too, should look upon the guilt of men and mourn over it before God; but yet in this special weeping Jesus is alone, there was a something in the tears of Gethsemane to which we cannot reach, for he who shed them was then beginning to suffer as our substitute, and in that case he must needs tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with him. Behold beneath the olive trees a solitary weeper, enduring a grief which, blessed be his name, is now impossible to us, seeing he has taken away the transgressions which called for it.

We will now turn to this second instance of our Saviour's weeping, and here we find when we look at the original word that it is not exactly expressed by the word used in our admirable English version. We there read, "He beheld the city, and *wept* over it"; but the Greek means a great deal more than tears, and includes sobbings and cries. Perhaps it may be best to read it, "He lamented over it." He suffered a deep inward anguish, and he expressed it by signs of woe, and by words which showed how bitter was his grief. Our subject will not be the lamentations of Jeremiah, but the lamentations of Jesus, the lamentations of him who could more truly say than the weeping prophet, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me." Jesus is here a king by general acclamation, but king of grief by personal lamentation. He is the sovereign of sorrow, weeping while riding in triumph in the midst of his followers. Looked he ever more kingly than when he showed the tenderness of his heart towards his rebellious subjects? The city which had been the metropolis of the house of David never saw so truly royal a man before, for he is fittest to rule who is readiest to sympathize.

We shall this morning, as God shall help us, first, consider *our Lord's inward grief;* and then, secondly, *his verbal lamentation.* Oh for the power of the Spirit to bless the meditation to the melting of all our hearts. O Lord, speak to the rock and bid the waters flow, or, if it please thee better, strike it with thy rod and make it gush with rivers: only in some way make us answer to the mourning of our Saviour.

> "Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
> And shall our cheeks be dry?
> Let floods of penitential grief
> Burst forth from every eye."

I. First, we are to contemplate OUR LORD'S INWARD GRIEF.

We note concerning it that it was so intense that *it could not be restrained by the occasion.* The occasion was one entirely by itself: a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter. His disciples had brought the colt and had placed him thereon, and he was riding to the city which was altogether moved at his coming. The multitudes were eager to do him homage with waving boughs and loud hosannahs, while his disciples in the inner circle were exulting in songs of praise which almost emulated the angelic chorales of

his birthnight. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men," found its echo when the disciples said, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Yet amidst the hosannahs of the multitude, while the palm branches were yet in many hands, the Saviour stopped to weep; on the very spot where David had gone centuries before weeping, the Son of David stayed awhile to look upon the city, and to pour out his lamentation. That must have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season, and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion, turning a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament. Ah! he knew the hollowness of all the praises which were ringing in his ears; he knew that they who shouted hosannah to-day would, ere many suns had risen, cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" He knew that his joyous entrance into Jerusalem would be followed by a mournful procession out of it, when they would take him to the cross that he might die. He saw amid all the effervescence of the moment the small residuum of sincerity that there was in it, and he accepted it; but he lamented the abundance of mere outward excitement, which would disappear like the froth of the sea, and so he stood and wept. It was a great sorrow, surely, which turned such a day of hopefulness into a season of anguish. It strikes me that all that day the Saviour fasted, and, if so, it is singular that he should have purposely kept for himself a fast while others on his account held a festival. The reason why he did so, I think, is this: Mark says, "And now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon." Such hunger had not come upon him if it had not been preceded by a fast the day before. See, then, your Lord surrounded, as it were, with billows of praise, in the midst of a tumultuous sea of exultation, himself standing as a lone rock, unmoved by all the excitement around him. Deep was the grief which could not be concealed or controlled on such a day, when the sincere congratulations of his disciples, the happy songs of children, and the loud hosannas of the multitude everywhere welcomed him.

The greatness of his grief may be seen, again, by the fact that *it overmastered other very natural feelings* which might have been, and perhaps were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where he could see Jerusalem before him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for his mental powers were unimpaired by sin, and he could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as he remembered them all, no joy came into his soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon; temple and tower had lost all charm for him; "the joy of the earth" brought no joy to him, but at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house he wept. Modern travellers who have any soul in them are always moved by the sublimity of the spectacle from the Mount of Olives. Dean Stanley wrote, "Nothing at Rome, Memphis, Thebes, Constantinople, or Athens can approach it in beauty or interest;" and yet this is the poor, mean Jerusalem of modern times, by no means

to be compared with the Jerusalem of our Saviour's day. Yet the Lord Jesus says nothing about this city, "Beautiful for situation," except to lament over it. If he counts the towers thereof, and marks well her bulwarks, it is only to bemoan their total overthrow. All the memories of the past did but swell the torrent of his anguish in the foresight of her doom.

Something of admiration may have entered the Saviour's holy breast; for before him stood his Father's house, of which he still thought so much, that even though he knew it would be left desolate, yet he took pains to purge it once again of the buyers and sellers who polluted it. That temple was built of white marble; much of it, the roof especially, covered with slabs of gold. It must have been one of the fairest objects that ever human eye rested upon as it glittered in the sun before him. But what were those great and costly stones? what were those curious carvings to him? His heart was saying within itself, "There shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be thrown down." His sadness at the foresight of the city's desolation mastered his natural feeling of admiration for its present glory. His sorrow found no alleviation either in the past or the present of the city's history; the dreadful future threw a pall over all.

It mastered, too, the sympathy which he usually felt for those who were about him. He would not stop his disciples from rejoicing, though the Pharisees asked him, but he, himself, took no share in the joy. Usually he was the most sensitive of men to all who were around him, sorrowing with their sorrow, and joying in their joy. But on this occasion they may wave their palms, and cut down branches of trees and strew them in the way, and the children may shout Hosanna, but he who was the centre of it all did not enter into the feeling of the hour: they triumph, but he weeps.

More striking still is the fact that his grief for others prevented all apprehension for himself. As he beheld that city, knowing that within a week he would die outside its gates, he might naturally have begun to feel the shadow of his sufferings, but no trace of such emotion is discoverable. You and I in such a case, with the certainty of a speedy and ignominious death before us, would have been heavy about it: but Jesus was not. In all that flood of tears there was not one for his own death; the tears were all for Jerusalem's doom, even as he said afterwards, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." It is not "Woe is me, the holy city will become an Aceldama, a field of blood by my slaughter," but "Oh, if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day." He grieves for others, not for himself; yet it must have been a very intense emotion which thus swept away, as with a torrent, everything else, so that he had neither joy for joy, nor sorrow for sorrow, but his whole strength of feeling was poured forth from one sluice, and ran in one channel towards the devoted city which had rejected him, and was about to put him to death.

This great sorrow of his reveals to us the nature of our Lord. How complex is the person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed, and though he was divine he wept. He knew every single event and detail of the dreadful tragedy, and used words about it of special historical accuracy which bring out his prophetic character, and

et the eye so clear in seeing the future was almost blinded with tears. Ie speaks of himself as willing and able to have averted this doom by athering the guilty ones under his wing, and thus he intimates his God-ead. While his nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the oom, the same nature from another side laments the dread necessity. will not say that his Godhead foresaw and his manhood lamented, for o mysteriously is the manhood joined to the Godhead that it makes ut one person, and it were better to assert that the entire nature of hrist lamented over Jerusalem. I have never been able to believe n an impassive God, though many theologians lay it down as an axiom hat God cannot suffer. It seems to me that he can do or endure anything he wills to do or endure, and I for one cannot see that there is any pecial glorifying of God in the notion that he is incapable in any direction whatever. We can only speak of him after the manner of men, and fter that manner he speaks of himself, and therefore there is no wrong n so doing. It brings the great Father nearer when we see him lamenting he wanderings of his children, and joying in their penitent return. What ut sorrow can be meant by such expressions as these? "How shall I give hee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make hee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned ithin me, my repentings are kindled together." "Hear, O heavens, nd give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and rought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox noweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not now, my people doth not consider." Are these the utterances of an unseeling God? I believe it is the Christ, the entire Christ, that both foretells the doom of Jerusalem and laments it. Some have even been staggered at the statement that Jesus wept. Certain of the early Christians, am sorry to say, even went the length of striking the passage out of he gospel, because they thought that weeping would dishonour their ord. They ought to have had more reverence for the inspired word, nd a truer knowledge of their Master, and never to have wished o obliterate a record which reflects the highest honour upon man's edeemer.

Our Lord's lament gives us an insight into the great tenderness of his haracter; he is so tender, that he not only weeps while weeping is of any vail, but he laments when lamentation must be fruitless. He reminds ne of a judge who, having aforetime been a friend, warning, persuading, leading with the prisoner, at last has the unutterable pain of conemning him: he puts on the black cap, and, with many a sigh and ear, pronounces sentence, feeling the dreadful nature of the occasion far ore than the criminal at the bar. He is overcome with emotion while e declares that the condemned must be taken to the place from whence e came and there die a felon's death. Oh the tender heart of Christ, hat when it comes to pronouncing the inevitable sentence, "Your house left unto you desolate," yet he cannot utter the righteous word without lamentation.

In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God. Did he not say, "He hat hath seen *me* hath seen the Father"? Here, then, you see the ather himself, even he who said of old, "As I live, saith the Lord God, have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn

from his way and live." The doom *must be* pronounced, for infinite justice demands it, but mercy laments what she was not permitted to prevent. Tears fall amid the thunders, and though the doom be sealed by obstinate impenitence, yet judgment is evidently strange work to the patient Judge. This anguish showed how dreadful was the sentence; for what could stir the Saviour so if the doom of sinners be a small affair? If the doom of guilt be such a trifle as some dream, I understand not whence these tears. The whole nature of Christ is convulsed as he thinks first of Jerusalem ploughed as a field, and her children slaughtered till their blood runs in rivers of gore: and next, as he beholds the doom of the ungodly, who must be driven from his presence, and from the glory of his power, to be the awful witnesses of divine justice, and of God's hatred of evil. Thus standing on the brow of Olivet the weeping Son of man reveals to us the heart of God, slow to anger, of great mercy, waiting to be gracious, and tardy in executing his wrath.

For a practical lesson, we may remark that *this weeping of the Saviour should much encourage men to trust him.* Those who desire his salvation may approach him without hesitation, for his tears prove his hearty desires for our good. When a man who is not given to sentimental tears, as some effeminate beings are, is seen to weep, we are convinced of his sincerity. When a strong man is passionately convulsed from head to foot, and pours out lamentations, you feel that he is in downright earnest, and if that earnestness be manifested on your behalf you can commit yourself to him. Oh, weeping sinner, fear not to come to a weeping Saviour! If you will not come to Jesus it grieves him; that you have not come long ago has wrung his heart; that you are still away from him is his daily sorrow: come, then, to him without delay. Let his tears banish your fears; yea, he gives you better encouragement than tears, for he has shed for sinners, not drops from his eyes alone, but from his heart. He died that sinners who believe in him might live. His whole body was covered with bloody sweat when he agonized for you; how can you doubt his readiness to receive you? The five scars that still remain upon his blessed person, up there at the Father's right hand, all invite you to approach him. These dumb mouths most eloquently entreat you to draw near and trust in him whom God hath set forth as the propitiation for sin. How shall he that wept and bled and died for sinners repulse a sinner who comes to him at his bidding? Oh, come, come, come, I pray you, even now, to the weeping Sinner's Friend.

This, too, I think is *an admonishment to Christian workers.* Some of us long ago came to Jesus, and we now occupy ourselves with endeavouring to bring others to him; in this blessed work our Lord instructs us by his example. Brothers and sisters, if we would have others come to Jesus we must be like Jesus in tenderness; we must be meek, lowly, gentle, and sympathetic, and we must be moved to deep emotion at the thought that any should perish. Never let us speak of the doom of the wicked harshly, flippantly, or without holy grief: the loss of heaven and the endurance of hell must always be themes for tears. That men should live without Christ is grief enough; but that they should die without Christ is an overwhelming horror, which should grind our hearts to powder before God and make us fall on our faces and cry, "O God, have mercy upon them, and save them, for thy grace and

for thy love's sake." The deepest tenderness, it may be, some of us have yet to learn. Perhaps we are passing through a school in which we shall be taught it, and if we do but learn it we need not care how severe the instructive discipline may require to be. We ought not to look upon this city of London without tears, nor even upon a single sinner without sorrow. We must preach tenderly, and teach tenderly, if we would win souls. We are not to weep continually, for even Jesus did not do that, yet are we always to feel a tender love towards men, so that we would be ready to die for them if we might but save them from the wrath to come, and bring them into the haven of the Saviour's rest.

Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should *instruct all those who would now come to him as to the manner of their approach.* While I appealed to you just now were there any who said, "I would fain come to Jesus, but how shall I come"? The answer is,—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." As Jesus meets you so meet him. He shows you in what fashion to return, in what array to draw near, to your Redeemer, for he comes to you clothed in no robes but those of mourning, adorned with no jewels but the pearls of his tears. Come to him in the garments of humiliation, mourning for your sin. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Penitential sorrow worketh life in men. Only come to Jesus and tell him you have sinned, and are ashamed, and fain would cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Come in all your misery and degradation, in all your consciousness of hell-desert. Come in sorrow to the Man of sorrows who is even now on the road to meet you. He hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and he will not forfeit his word.

God bless these feeble words concerning the inner emotions of my Lord, and may the Holy Spirit again rest upon us while we further pursue the subject into another field.

III. We are now to consider OUR LORD'S VERBAL LAMENTATIONS. These are recorded in the following words:—"Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

First, notice, he laments over *the fault by which they perished*—"Oh that thou hadst known." Ignorance, wilful ignorance, was their ruin. "Oh that thou hadst known." They did not know what they might have known, what they ought to have known: they did not know their God. "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." They knew not God, they knew not God's only Son, they knew not him who came in mercy to them with nothing but love upon his lips. Oh, but this is the pity, that light is come into the world and men will not have it, but love darkness rather than light. Alas, I fear that some of my hearers live in the light, and will not see. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear, and none so blind as those that will not see; and yet there are such in all Christian congregations, who do not know and will not know. God saith, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Our Lord lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they

would have none of his counsel, they despised his reproof. Wilful ignorance led to obstinate unbelief; they chose to die in the dark rather than accept the light of the Son of God.

The Lord laments *the bliss which they had lost*, the peace which could not be theirs. "Oh that thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace." The name of that city was as we know Jerusalem, which being interpreted, signifies a vision of peace. They that looked upon it saw before them a vision of peace. But, alas, Jerusalem had lost its "salem," or peace, and become a vision only, because she did not know and would not know her God. Oh men and women that know not God, you have lost peace; even now you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." Oh what joys you might have had! The delights of pardoned sin, the bliss of conscious safety, the joy of communion with God, the rapture of fellowship with Christ Jesus, the heavenly expectation of infinite glory, all might have been yours; but you have put them away from you. The Lord saith of you, as of Israel of old, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand upon their adversaries." God would have revealed to you by his Spirit brighter things than eye hath seen, and sweeter joys than ear hath heard: for if ye had been willing and obedient ye should have eaten the fat of the land of his promise. You are losers, you are awful losers by not being reconciled to God, and you will be worse losers yet, for that false peace which now stands you in the stead of true peace, and beguiles and fascinates you, will depart like the mirage of the desert, and leave you on the arid sands of despair, to seek for rest and find it not. Soon shall a terrible sound be in your ears of the approaching vengeance of God, and there shall be for you no place of refuge.

When the Lord thought of what they had lost, he cried, "Oh that thou hadst known!" I feel ashamed to repeat his words, because I cannot repeat them in the tone he used. Oh, to hear Jesus say these words! Methinks it might melt a heart of stone! But no. I am mistaken, even that would not do it; for those who did hear him were not melted nor reclaimed, but went on their way to their doom as they had done before. How hardened are the men who can trample on a Redeemer's tears! What wonder that they find a hell where not a drop of water can ever cool their parched tongues, tormented in the flame! If men are resolved to be damned, it is evident that the tears of the best, the most perfect of men cannot stop them. Woe is me! This is deeper cause for tears than all else besides, that men should be so desperately set on mischief that nothing but Omnipotence will stay them from eternal suicide!

But our Lord also lamented over *the persons who had lost peace*. Observe that he says,—"Oh that *thou* hadst known, *even thou*. Thou art Jerusalem, the favoured city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that *thou* shouldst not know!" Ah, friends, if Jesus were here this morning, he might weep over some of you and say—"Oh that thou hadst known, even *thou*." You were a lovely child! Even in your earliest days you were fond of everything good and gracious; you were taken to the place of worship, and sat on

your mother's knee, pleased to be there. Do you remember the minister's name that you used to lisp with delight, the texts you repeated, and the hymns you sang? You grew up to be a lad right full of promise, and all felt sure that you would be a Christian. What exhortations your father, who is now in heaven, gave you! And she that bare you and loved you till she passed away, how she prayed and pleaded for you! Some of you have been sitting here, or in some other place where Christ is preached, for a very long time, and you have often been very near to the kingdom, and yet you are not in it. You have come right up to the edge of the border-land, but you have not crossed the line. You are not far from the kingdom of God, but you lack one thing,—the one essential point of decision for Christ. "Oh that thou hadst known, even *thou!*" You are always ready to help the cause of God with your purse, for you take an interest in every good work, you cannot bear blasphemy or infidelity; and yet you are not saved. There are a thousand things that are hopeful about you, but there is one thing which damps our hope, for you always procrastinate, and know not how to use your present opportunity. Jesus bids you use "this thy day," but you linger and delay. To-day is God's accepted time; postpone no longer the hour of decision. Alas, that *thou* shouldst perish! Shall the child of such a mother be lost? Shall the son of such a father be driven down to hell? I cannot bear it. God have mercy on you, sons and daughters of Christian parents! You that have been enriched with Christian privileges, why will ye die? Young man, so promising but yet so undecided, it makes the Saviour himself weep that thou, even thou, shouldst still refuse to know the things that make for thy peace.

Our Lord wept because of *the opportunity which they had neglected.* He said, "At least in this thy day." It was such a favoured day: they aforetime had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God himself to preach to them. It was a day of miracles of mercy, a day of the unveiling of gospel grace; and yet they would not have Christ though he had come so near to them, and it was a day of merciful visitation such as other nations had not known. Perhaps to-day also may be a day of visitation to some of you. Shall we have to lament, "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day,"—in this Sabbath-day, this day of power, this day of the Spirit. Oh now you weep, and I perceive you feel some tender touches of the Spirit's power; do not resist him and cause this day also to pass away unimproved. "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and you are not saved;" and has the autumn closed, and shall the winter come and go, and shall these days in which the Spirit visits men all depart till God shall declare that it does not become the dignity of his Spirit always to strive with flesh, and therefore he shall cease his operations and leave men to their own devices. Oh, souls, I pray you think of Christ weeping because revival days and Sabbath days are being wasted by you. Do not in these best of days commit the worst of sins by still refusing to receive the gospel of God.

The Lord Jesus mourned again because *he saw the blindness which had stolen over them.* They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see: their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy; their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross; so that they

could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that he should heal them. Why, the truth was as plain as the sun in the heavens, and yet they could not see it; and so is the gospel at this hour to many of you, and yet you perceive it not. There is nothing plainer than the plan of salvation by looking unto Jesus, and yet many men have gone on so long resisting the sweetness and light of the Spirit of God that they cannot now see the Lord Jesus who is as the sun in the heavens. The kindest friends have put the gospel before them in a way that has enlightened others, but it has not affected them; they still say, "I cannot see it!" O ye blind ones, take heed lest this has come upon you, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Christ groans because the things which belonged to the peace of Jerusalem were hid from their eyes as a punishment for refusing to see.

Lastly, we know that the great flood-gates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of *the ruin which he foresaw*. It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by Josephus: it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen; it remains the tragedy of tragedies; there never was and there never will be anything comparable to it: the people died of famine and of pestilence, and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children, and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city, it was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. Portents amazed the sky both day and night. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept of mercy. The city itself was the banqueting hall of death. Josephus says: "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried; but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing."

There is nothing in history to exceed this horror. But even this is nothing compared with the destruction of a soul. A man might look with complacency upon a dying body if he knew that within it was a soul that would live eternally in bliss and cause the body to rise again to equal joy; but for a soul to die is a catastrophe so terrible that the heavens might be clothed with sackcloth for its funeral. There is a death which never ends, the separation of the soul from God, which is the completest of all deaths. The separation of the soul from the body is but, as it were, a prelude and type of the far more dreadful death, the separation of the soul from God. Banished from hope, existing but not living, and that for ever; what a condition must this be! I shall

draw no picture: words fail; but, oh, my hearers, shall it be that any one among *you* shall ever know the meaning of the Saviour's words: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"? Will it ever be your lot to hear him say—you who hear me this day, I mean—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels"? If we could mark any here to whom this doom will happen, we might make a ring around them and bear them home, rending our garments and tearing our hair; for it would be a far greater grief than if we knew that they would die by the sword or by famine in a foreign land. All ills are trifles compared with the second death.

Just a moment, while in conclusion I set forth our Saviour's grief, as it expressed itself in other words; for those other words may help us to fresh light. You remember the passage in the twenty-third of Matthew, which I read in your hearing, where the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Do you see his grace and grief? These people killed the prophets, and yet the Lord of prophets would have gathered them. His love had gone so far that even prophet-killers he would have gathered. Is not this wonderful that there should be grace enough in Christ to gather adulterers, thieves, liars, and to forgive and change them, and yet they will not be gathered? That he should be willing even to gather such base ones into a place of salvation, and yet should be refused? The pith of it lies in this—"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." See, here, the case stands thus—I would, but ye would not. This is a grief to love. If it had been a fact that *Christ* would not, then I could not understand his tears; but when he says "I would, but *ye* would not then," I see the deep reason of his anguish. The failure of will is in you that perish, not in Christ who cries, "I would, but ye would not." Ay, and he adds, "How often would I." Not once was he in a merciful mood, and pitiful to sinners for that time alone, but he cries, "How often would I have gathered." Every prophet that had come to them had indicated an opportunity for their being gathered, and every time that Jesus preached there was a door set open for their salvation, but they would not be gathered, and so he foretells their fate in these words,—"Your house shall be left unto you desolate." Here is a painful sentence. Set the two words in contrast—"Gathered," that is what you might have been; "desolate," that is what you shall be; and Jesus weeps because of it. "Gathered," —it is such a beautiful picture; you see the little chicks fleeing from danger, when they hear the cluck of the mother hen; they gather together, and they come under her wings. Did you ever hear that little, pretty cry they make when they are all together, with their heads buried in the feathers? How warm and comfortable they are! This is where you might have been, gathered under the warm breast of the eternal God, feeling his love with the rest of the people, joying and rejoicing in a communion of complete security; but inasmuch as you would not be gathered, see what you will be, "desolate," without a friend, without a helper. Then you will call to the saints, but they shall not be able to

help you. Say unto them, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out": but they must refuse you. Unto which of the holy ones will you turn? What angel will have pity upon you? Each cherub waves his fiery sword to keep you from the gate of paradise. There is no help for you in God when once you die without him; no help for you anywhere. Desolate! Desolate! Desolate! Because you would not be gathered! Well doth the tender Saviour weep over men since they will perversely choose such a doom.

I do not feel as if you could close in gloom; I must flash before you a brighter light, though it be but for the last minute. The day hastens on when Christ will come a second time, and then he shall behold a new Jerusalem, a spiritual Jerusalem, builded by divine hands. The foundations thereof are of jewels and the gates thereof are of pearl. How he will rejoice over it! He shall rest in his love, he shall rejoice over it with singing. He will shed no tears then, but he will see in the Jerusalem from above the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied. When Zion shall be built up the Lord shall appear in his glory, and the marriage of the Lamb will have come. Meanwhile, if any one of you who are not yet saved will come to Jesus, he will rejoice over you, for he takes pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favoureth the dust thereof, and if you are as little as Zion's dust and as mean as her rubbish, he will rejoice over you. It is written that "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Now, angels stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and there is joy in his heart over a single penitent. If only one sinner shall repent because of this sermon, my Lord will rejoice over him. I, his servant, am, in my measure, intensely glad when a soul repents, but he shall have the chief joy, for his is the chief love. Who will now come to Jesus? Would God it might be the beloved son of a godly mother! Would God it might be you, my long-hesitating hearer, for years a hearer but not a doer of the word. May the Holy Spirit decide you at this very moment.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i. 1—20; Matthew xxiii. 34—39; Luke xix. 36—44.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—195, 265, 473.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE JOY OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 5TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."—Luke x. 21, 22.

LAST Lord's-day morning we considered the lamentations of Jesus; we will now turn our thoughts to the joys of Jesus. It is remarkable that this is the only instance on record in the gospels in which our Lord is said to have rejoiced. It stands alone, and is, therefore, the more to be prized:—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." He was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" for our sakes, and therefore we are not astonished to find few indications of joy in the story of his life. Yet I do not think it would be fair to infer from the fact of a solitary mention of his rejoicing that he did not rejoice at other times; on the contrary, our Lord must, despite his sorrow, have possessed a peaceful, happy spirit. He was infinitely *benevolent*, and went about doing good; and benevolence always finds a quiet delight in blessing others. The joy of the lame when they leaped, and of the blind when they saw, must have gladdened the soul of Jesus. To cause happiness to others must bring home to a sympathetic bosom some degree of pleasure. Sir Philip Sydney was wont to say, "Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life;" and assuredly it is hard to see how the love of Jesus could refrain from rejoicing in blessing those around him.

Moreover, our Lord was so *pure* that he had a well of joy within which could not fail him. If it be indeed true that virtue is true happiness, then Jesus of Nazareth was happy. The poet said—

> "What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy,
> Is virtue's prize."

Such calm and joy must have been the Saviour's, though for our sake he bowed beneath the heavy load of sorrow. The perfectly holy God is the perfectly happy God; and the perfectly holy Christ, had it not been that he had taken upon himself our griefs and sicknesses, would have been perfectly

happy; but even with our griefs and sicknesses there must have been a deep peace of soul within him which sustained him in his deepest woe. Did not the Father himself say of his beloved Son, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows"?

Nor is this all, for our blessed Lord lived in unbroken fellowship with the Father, and fellowship with God will not permit a soul to abide in darkness: for, walking with God, he walks in the light as God is in the light. Such a mind may, for certain purposes, come under clouds and glooms; but light is sown for the righteous, and it will speedily break forth as the dawn of day. Those nights of prayer and days of perfect service must have brought their own calm to the tried heart of the Son of God.

Besides, Christ Jesus was a man of *faith;* faith's highest exposition and example. He is "the author and the finisher of faith," in whom we see its life, walk, and triumph. Our Lord was the incarnation of perfect confidence in the Father: in his life all the histories of great believers are summed up. Read the eleventh of the Hebrews, and see the great cloud of witnesses, and then mark how in the twelfth chapter Paul bids us look to Jesus as though in his person the whole multitude of the witnesses could be seen. He it was, who "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." His faith must, therefore, have anticipated the reward of his passion, and have brought the joy thereof home to him even while he sorrowed here. His joy was a light from the lamps of the future, which were to be kindled by his death and victory. He had meat to eat that his disciples knew not of; for his long-sighted eye saw further than they, and while they mourned his departure he saw the expediency of it, and told them that if they loved him they would rejoice, because he was going to the Father. Be sure of this, that our Lord felt beneath the great waterfloods of outward affliction an under-current of joy, for he said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." What meant he by this if he had no joy in his people? Could he have spoken so many happy words, and so often have said to his disciples "Be of good cheer," if he had been always downcast himself?

But still it is remarkable that our text should be the sole recorded instance of his joy, so far as the evangelists are concerned. It is clear that joy was not a distinguishing feature in our Lord's life, so as to strike the beholder. Peace may have sat serenely on his brow, but nothing of the exuberant spirits which are seen in some men, for his countenance was marred with lines of care and grief. We do not hear that he laughed, though it is thrice recorded that he wept; and here for once, as quite unique, we find the inspired assurance that he rejoiced. Because of its singularity the record deserves to be looked into with care that we may see the cause of delight so unusual.

The words here used are very emphatic. "He rejoiced." The Greek word is much stronger than the English rendering; it signifies "to leap for joy." It is the word of the blessed Virgin's song, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Strong emotions of delight were visible upon our Lord's face, and were expressed by the tones of his voice as well as by his words. It is clear that he was greatly glad. The text also

says, he "rejoiced *in spirit*": that is, deep down in the very centre of his nature, in that largest and most capacious part of his human being, the Redeemer rejoiced. Man is body, soul, and spirit; but the spirit is the nobler and most vital part, and it was with a spiritual, inward, and most living joy that the Lord Jesus Christ rejoiced. It was joy of the truest and fullest sort which made the Saviour's heart to dance. Come we, then, near to this rejoicing Saviour, who wraps the garments of praise about him, perfumed with delight; and let us see if we cannot learn somewhat from his joys, since, I trust, we gathered something from his griefs.

I. First, let us look at our Lord and note that his joy was JOY IN THE FATHER'S REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL. "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He rejoices in his Father's revelation of the gospel. It was not joy in the fame which had gathered about his name insomuch that John heard of it in prison. It was not joy in the manifest tokens of power that went forth with his commissioners, though they rejoiced that devils were subject unto them; but it was joy in God's revealing the gospel to the sons of men.

I call your attention to the fact that he ascribed all that was done to the Father, *and joyed that the Father was working with him.* His disciples came back to him and said, "Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name"; and they spake not amiss, for the name of Jesus was their strength, and deserved honour; but the Lord, with that sacred self-abnegation which was so natural to him, replies, "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast revealed these things." He takes no honour unto himself, but ascribes the glory unto the Father, who wrought with him. Imitate him, O ye who call him Lord! Let the work of the Father be your joy. If God gives us any success in the preaching of the gospel let our joy be that the Father's power is going forth with the word. We are not so much to joy in *our* instrumentality as in the hand which uses the instrument, and works by it. Oh, misery! misery! to be attempting gospel ministry without God! But oh, bliss, bliss unspeakable, to feel that when we lift our hand God's hand is lifted too, and when we speak the word the voice of God is ringing through our feeble speech, and reaching the hearts of men! It is to true believers a great joy that the Father is bringing home his wandering children, and receiving penitents into his bosom.

The Saviour's joy was that through the Father's grace *men were being enlightened.* The seventy disciples had been from city to city, working miracles and preaching the gospel, and their Master was glad when they returned with tidings of success: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It pleases Jesus when the gospel has free course, and God is glorified thereby. Then, in measure, he sees of the travail of his soul, and is filled with satisfaction. Shall we not find our joy where he finds his? Shall we not enter into the joy of our Lord? Whenever we hear good news of a village evangelized, of a township moved by the glad tidings, of a country long shut up from the gospel at length opened to the word, let us feel our highest and deepest joy. Rather let us rejoice in this than in business prosperity or personal advantage. What if we can find no joy in our own circumstances, what if even spiritual affairs within our

soul are full of difficulty; let us joy and rejoice that God the Father is revealing the light of his gospel among the sons of men. Be this our highest wish, "Thy kingdom come," and in that coming kingdom let us find our utmost happiness. Be sure that the joy which warmed the heart of Christ can do us no hurt: it must be a pure, sacred, and ennobling joy, and therefore let us indulge in it very largely. Christ's joy lay in the Father's sending forth his light and his truth, making men to see things which prophets and kings had desired to behold, but had not been favoured to see. Jesus rejoiced in this, that the blessings of grace were being revealed by the Father.

Further, our Saviour's joy lay very much in this, that this revelation to men *was being made through such humble instruments*. We read that "he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." There was not among the twelve or the seventy, one person of any social status. They were the common people of the field and the sea. In after years Paul was raised up, a man richly endowed in learning, whose great abilities were used by the Lord, but the first ministers of Christ were a band of fishermen and countrymen, altogether unknown in the schools of learning, and regarded as "unlearned and ignorant men." The grandest era in the world's history was ushered in by nobodies: by persons who, like their leader, were despised and rejected of men. To any one of them it might have been said, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Observe carefully that the persons whom our Lord had been employing were not only obscure in origin, but they were of a low degree of spiritual understanding, were in fact babes in grace as well as worldly wisdom. Their joy, when they came back to tell what had been done, was evidently childish as well as gracious. They joyed in their success as children do in their little achievements; but their Lord was thankful, because he saw the open-heartedness and the simplicity of their characters in the gladsome way in which they cried, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name," and he thanked God that by such babes as these, such children, such true-hearted children, and yet such mere children, he was pleased to make known his word among the sons of men. Rest ye sure that our Lord even at this day finds a delight in the weakness of the instruments he uses.

> "He takes the fool and makes him know
> The mysteries of his grace;
> To bring aspiring wisdom low,
> And all its pride abase."

Not you, ye scribes, who have counted every letter of the Old Testament, does he elect to be filled with the Spirit. Not you, ye Pharisees, who so abound in outward religion, does he choose to spread the inward life and light. Not you, ye Sadducees, who are versed in sceptical philosophy, and boast your cleverness, does he call to preach his gospel to the

poor. He hath taken to be the heralds of his glory men from the sea of Galilee whom ye despise: men, simple-hearted, ready to learn, and then as ready to tell out again, the message of salvation. Our Lord was by no means displeased with the absence of culture and learning in his followers, for the culture and learning of the period were utter vanity, but he was glad to see that they did not pretend to wisdom or astuteness, but came to him in all simplicity to accept his teaching, because they believed him to be the Son of God. Jesus rejoiced in spirit about this.

And yet, further, his great joy was *that the converts were of such a character* as they were. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It is true that certain persons sneeringly asked, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" There were some who thought lightly of Jesus because those whom they imagined to be learned men had not signified their adhesion to his cause; our Lord himself had no concern in that direction, but called the Pharisees blind and the scribes hypocrites, as they assuredly were. Other voices may have enquired, "Who are these that follow Jesus? Of what class are his converts?" The answer would have been, "They are rustics, fishermen, and common people, with here and there a woman of substance and a man of means. The bulk of them are the poor to whom for the first time the gospel is preached. Such have gathered to Christ and received his word." Some even said that a parcel of boys and girls were in the streets crying, "Hosanna," and this showed how common-place the Preacher was. At this day I have heard the Lord's people spoken of as a poor set; people of no position, a lot of persons whose names will never be known, a mere assembly of Jack, Tom, Harry, Mary, Susan, and the rest. This was the very thing to which Jesus refers with thankfulness. He was glad that he was surrounded by unsophisticated, childlike natures, rather than by Pharisees and scribes, who, even if they be converted, are sure to bring some of their old manners with them.

He was glad that the Father had revealed his light and his salvation to those who were lowly and humble, who, though poor in this world, were "rich in faith, giving glory to God." Thus you see that the very fact, which certain very superior people fling in our teeth as a disgrace, was to our Saviour a subject of joy. I have heard foolish ones sneer at certain churches which are earnest for the truth by affectedly asking, "Who are they? A mob of common people, tradesmen or working men, and the like. Are there any of the aristocracy among them? Do you find any of the highly intellectual in their ranks?" What if we do not, we shall not therefore sorrow, but join with Jesus in saying, "We thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Christ found himself at home among those open-hearted folks that gathered around him, for he was himself a child-man, who wore his heart upon his sleeve, boasting of no wisdom though he was wisdom's self. Our Lord never sought himself, as the wise and prudent of his age did; but he was meek and lowly in heart, and therefore found himself at home amongst a people who were willing to receive his teaching and eager to tell it out again to their countrymen; and so he blessed and praised God that such were chosen. Oh, friends, it is not that Christ would not have the greatest come to him, it is not

that Christ would not have the learned come to him; but so it is, that his greatest joy is that those come who, whatever the greatness or the littleness of their learning, are childlike in spirit, and like babes are willing to learn, and prepared to receive what he shall teach to them. He was glad to receive persons with lowly notions of their own intelligence, and a supreme belief in the veracity of their great Teacher.

If those who are reckoned to be learned profess to come to Christ they are generally a trial to the church. All the merely human learning that has ever come unto the church has, as a rule, been mischievous to it: and it always needs great grace to keep it in its right place. At first came the Gnostics with their philosophy, and into what perils they dragged the church of God I cannot stay to tell you: then arose others out of whose wisdom grew Arianism, and the church was well-nigh withered to her very heart by that deadly form of heresy. The schoolmen did for her much the same, and to this day whenever any of the would-be-thought-wise men meddle with religion, they tell us that the plain word of God, as we read it, must be interpreted by modern thought, and that it bears another meaning which only the cultured can possibly comprehend. When philosophy invades the domain of revelation it ends in perverting the gospel, and in bringing in "another gospel which is not another." It is with human wisdom as it is with human riches, how hardly shall they that have it enter into the kingdom of God! True wisdom is another thing; that is a gift which cometh from above, and causeth no puffing up of the heart, for it adores the God from whom it came. The wisdom which is true and real the Lord is prepared to give to those who confess their unwisdom, to those who will be babes in his sight. It is not ignorance which God loves, but conceit that he hates. Knowledge is good, but the affectation of it is evil. O for more true wisdom! May God give us much of it, and may those who are babes as yet come to be men of full stature in Christ Jesus. Yet forget not your Lord's joy in the character of his converts, but remember the lines in which the poet of the sanctuary paraphrases our text:—

"Jesus, the man of constant grief,
A mourner all his days,
His Spirit once rejoiced aloud,
And turned his joy to praise.

"Father, I thank thy wondrous love,
That hath revealed thy Son
To men unlearned, and to babes
Hath made thy gospel known.

"The mysteries of redeeming grace
Are hidden from the wise,
While pride and carnal reasoning join
To swell and blind their eyes."

Our Lord's joy sprang from one other source, namely, his view of *the manner in which God was pleased to save his people.* It was by *revealing* these things to them. There is, then, to every man who is saved a revelation, not of anything over and above what is given us in the word of God; but of that same truth to himself personally and with power. In the word is the light; but what is needed is that each man's eye

should be opened by the finger of God to see it. Truth in the Scriptures will never save till it becomes truth in the heart: it must be "revealed" unto the most unprejudiced and true-hearted. Even men of childlike spirits and receptive natures will not see the truth unless it be specially revealed to them. There must be a work of the Father through the Holy Ghost upon each intellect and mind ere it can perceive the truth as it is in Jesus. Hence, when unregenerate men tell us that they cannot see the beauty of the gospel, we are not at all astonished,—we never thought they could: and when boastful men of "culture" declare that the old-fashioned gospel is unworthy of the nineteenth century with all its enlightenment, we are not surprised; for we knew that they would think so. Blind men are little pleased with colour, and deaf men care little for music.

Human wisdom cannot make a man without eyes see the light. What do you know about the gospel, oh ye blinded wise men? What judges can you be of the light of revelation who seal up your eyes with the mud of your own cleverness, and then say you cannot see! Christ never intended that you should. He will only reveal himself as he pleases, and he hath pleased to do this to another kind of persons from what you are. Oh, you that are wise in your own conceit, the gate of true wisdom is barred against you! You cannot by searching find out God, and when he graciously reveals himself you refuse to see him, and therefore it is just that you should perish in the dark. Well do you deserve this judgment. Let justice be done. That God had been pleased to reveal himself to many through the preaching of the seventy was a great joy to Jesus; and let us also rejoice whenever God reveals himself to men. Let us be glad when one who is simple in heart is made a child by divine grace through being born again. Let us furthermore rejoice whenever conversion is wrought by instruments that cannot possibly claim the glory of it. Let us praise and bless God that salvation is his own work from first to last. Come, all ye who love the Father, and say, with the great Firstborn, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

II. I have thus tried, as far as I am able, to explain the cause of the Saviour's joy; I would now call your attention to HIS MODE OF EXPRESSING THAT JOY.

I have noticed some kind of joy in conversions which has not been wise in its expression, but has savoured of glorying in the flesh. "Oh, we have had a wonderful time, we have had a blessed season! We have been visited by those dear men, and we have exerted ourselves in downright earnest to get up a revival. We have done wonders." Such talk will not do. Hear how the Saviour speaks; his joy finds tongue in *thanksgiving*,—"I thank thee, O Father." He ascribes the work to the Father, and then renders all the praise to him. This is the eloquence of joy—"I thank thee, O Father." Brethren, whenever you are happy, sing hymns of thanksgiving. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." The fittest language for joy, whether it be on earth or in heaven, is adoration and thanksgiving to God. Blessed be the name of the Lord that we are gladdened in the harvest field of Christian work, for it is he

that giveth seed to the sower and causeth the word to spring up and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

Our Lord found expression for his joy in *declaring the Father's sovereignty.* "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Some shrink back from the idea of God as Lord of all things above and below. To them the free will of man seems the greatest of all facts; and lest there should be the slightest intrusion upon man's domain they would have God limited as to his absolute power. To magnify man they would minimize God. You will hear them talking against those of us who magnify divine sovereignty, and imputing to us the notion of a certain arbitrariness in God, although such a thought has never entered our minds. Jehovah, who gives no account of his matters, but orders all things according to the good pleasure of his will, is never arbitrary, unjust, or tyrannical: and yet he is absolute and uncontrolled, a sovereign who reigns by his own self-existent power, himself the source and origin of all law. He can be trusted with absolute sovereignty, because he is infinite love and infinite goodness. I will go the utmost length as to the absolute supremacy of God, and his right to do as he wills, and especially so do as he wills with his own, which gospel grace most certainly is. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou? When Christ was gladdest he expressed that gladness by ascribing unto God an infinite sovereignty, and shall that truth be gloomy to us? Nay, rather we will each one view the work of the Father's grace, and cry, "I thank thee, O Father, and I thank thee all the more because I know that thou art Lord of heaven and earth."

If I am addressing any who quarrel with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, I would advise them to cease their rebellion, for "the Lord reigneth." Let them at least go as far as the Psalm, "Let the people tremble"; even if they cannot go a little further and sing, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." Power and rule are best in the hands of the great Jehovah, who ever links together in his own single character both fatherhood and sovereignty. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Dismiss from your minds all caricatures of the doctrine, and receive it in its purest form—"the Lord is king for ever and ever. Hallelujah." Your joy, if it be deeply spiritual and very great, will never find room enough for the sweep of its Atlantic waves, till you delight yourself in the absolute supremacy of God. The deep ground swell of delight within the Redeemer's soul could find no grander space over which it could expand its force than the unlimited power and dominion of the Lord of heaven and earth, whose key it is which opens or shuts the kingdom of heaven, whose word it is which hides or reveals the things of eternity.

Our Lord *delighted in the special act of sovereignty* which was before him, that the Lord had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes." He communed with God in it, he took pleasure in it, and said, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." His voice, as it were, went with the Father's voice; he agreed with the Father's choice, he rejoiced in it, he triumphed in it. The will of the Father was the will of Christ, and he had fellowship with the

Father in every act of his sovereign choice; yea, he magnified God for it in his inmost spirit. He says, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight;" for he knew that what seems good to God must be good. Some things seem good to us which are evil; but that which seemeth good to God is good. Jesus praises God about it for no other reason than it is God's good pleasure that it should be so. Oh, what a state of heart it will be for you and me to get into when we can express our highest joy by a perfect acquiescence in the will of God, whatever that will may be. See here, brethren, the road to contentment, to peace, to happiness, yea, heavenly life this side the grave. If you ever come to feel that what pleases God pleases you, you will be glad even in affliction and tribulation. If your heart is ever schooled down to accept as your will that which is God's will, and to believe anything to be good because God thinks it good, then you may go through the rest of your days singing and waiting till your Lord takes you to his own bosom. Soon will you rise to the place where all the singers meet and sing for ever unto God and the Lamb; all self and rebellion being for ever banished. Herein, then, Christ found a channel for his joy—in thanksgiving, in magnifying the divine sovereignty, in having communion with it and in delighting in it.

III. Thirdly, and briefly, I want you to see OUR LORD'S EXPLANATION OF THE FATHER'S ACT. The Father had been pleased to hide these things from the wise and prudent and to reveal them unto babes, and Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with that order of things, quite content with the kind of converts he has and the kind of preachers that God has given him.

For, first, *the Lord Jesus does not need prestige.* Read the twenty-second verse—"All things are delivered to me of my Father." A mere pretender, when he begins to prophesy and set himself up for a religious leader, how pleased he is when some learned doctor endorses his claims! If some man of wealth and station comes to his side how he plumes himself. The Saviour of our souls sought no such aids. The verdict of the world's *literati* could not make his word more truthful than it is, nor more convincing, for its power lies in the Spirit which reveals it. If great men say "Aye," they will not make his doctrine more sure; nor will they make it less truthful if they all say "Nay." Prestige for Christ! It is blasphemy to think of such a thing. "All things," saith he, "are delivered to me of my Father." High priests and leaders of religion denounce him, but all things are delivered unto him of his Father. The Sanhedrim determine to put him down, but all things are delivered unto him of the Father. The learned deride his claims to be the Messiah! What matters it to Christ? The Father has committed all things into his hand. He stands alone, and asks for no allies; his own power, unborrowed and unaided, is quite sufficient for his purposes. Do you think, brethren, that we are going to stay our preaching of the gospel until we shall have the so-called culture and intellect of the age upon our side to say, "It is even so"? Not we, but rather do we believe God in the teeth of the wiseacres, and say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Jesus needs no imprimatur from scholars, no patronage from princes, no apologies from orators. The pomp, and power, and wisdom, and cunning of the world were not with him, and he thanks God that he is not encumbered with such doubtful gain, but that this truth has been revealed to

those who are not wise in their own eyes, nor intelligent in their own esteem, but, like children, willing to learn from God, and glad to believe all that he reveals.

See how the Lord explains it yet further, by showing that *human wisdom cannot find out God.* "No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son." No man; though he be a master in Israel. Men of science may puzzle their brains, and with great ingenuity they may try to thread the intricacies of the unknown, but they must err from the truth if they refuse revelation. Such a thing as natural religion, spontaneously born of man's intellect, does not exist. "Oh," say you, "surely there is much of it." I say that whatever is truly religious in it was borrowed from revelation, and has been handed down by tradition. Talk of comparative religions—there is but one, and the other pretenders have stolen certain of its clothes. Men see, no doubt, much of God in nature, but they would not have done so had there been no revelation. First came the light through revelation, and then afterwards, when men saw it reflected from various objects, they dreamed that the light came out of the reflectors. Men hear something of revealed truth, and when their thoughts run in that line, that which they have heard is awakened in their minds, and they think themselves inventors. God is not known except as he reveals himself, nor can he be discovered by human ingenuity. Carnal wit and thought tend not that way, but tend from God unto blackest darkness. God is only to be known through Christ, so the text saith: "No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." As the light, after God had created it, was lodged in the sun, so is all knowledge of God treasured up in Christ as the Sun of righteousness. He it is that in himself hath light, the light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world, if he be lightened at all. We must receive Christ or abide in darkness; yea, and the light which is in Christ is not perceptible by any man except by revelation. What saith the text, "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him"? There must be a special and distinct revelation of Christ, and of the Father by Christ to each man, or else he will remain in blindness to the day of his death.

The power, then, which lies in merely human wisdom is a force which often hinders men from coming under the influence of revelation. Only by revelation can they know, and by a revelation personally receive. But the man is so wise that he does not want to be taught, he can find it out for himself. Yield himself to an infallible book or an infallible spirit? Not he! Well, then, because of his very wisdom he becomes incapable of learning. Truth to tell, what is human wisdom? The supposed wisdom of man is folly, that is the short for it all. They write a history sometime of religious thought, and of the various phases through which Christianity has gone, and on this they ground remarks; but I should like somebody to write a truthful history of philosophy. The history of philosophy is a record of the insanities of mankind: a catalogue of lunacies. You shall see one generation of philosophers busily engaged in refuting those that went before them, and doing it very well indeed. But what will the next generation do? Why refute this! The

philosophies that were current one hundred years ago are all exploded now, and all the teachings of to-day, except such as are clear matters of fact, will be exploded ere I go down to my grave, if I live to be grey-headed. There is not a philosopher now living that can be sure but what there is some other fact to be discovered yet which will upset every hypothesis that he hath sent forth into the world. Philosophers who conceitedly glory over believers in revelation are fools, for they know nothing with certainty, and absolute certainty appertains only to divine revelation. In those who pretend to wisdom apart from God folly abounds. There is no light in them, nor in any man except that which cometh from the Spirit of God. That wisdom which sets itself up apart from God is atheism, because God knoweth, and he saith to man, "I will teach you, I will reveal myself to you by my Son." But wisdom says, "We do not want to be taught: we know of ourselves." Then you are a rival to God! You pretend to be superior to God, since you are not willing to learn of him, but will rather trust yourself. This folly and this atheism are the reasons why God hides his mind from the wise and the clever; they reject him, and therefore he gives them over to a judicial blindness, and Christ thanks him that he does, for it is but justice that he should do so. When the Lord is pleased to give to any man a childlike spirit then is he on the road to knowledge. This is true even in science itself. The secrets of nature will never be revealed to the man who believes that he already knows them. Nature herself does not teach the man who comes to her with prejudice. A man who thinks he knows beforehand sits down to study nature, and what does he generally discover? Well, he learnedly dreams of a universal solvent, or that the baser metals can be transmuted into gold, or that there is a perpetual motion. Those, you say, are things philosophers believed years ago. Yes, but their theories of to-day are just as stupid, and the science of to-day will be the jest of the next century. The greatest absurdities have been the pets of philosophy for hundreds of years, and why was it that men did not know better? Because they did not go to nature and ask her to teach them what was fact; they made an hypothesis, and then they went to nature to force her to prove it, as they do now; they start with a prejudgment of what they would like to be, and then take facts and twist them round into their system, and so they blind themselves by their own wisdom. Well, if it be so in nature, and I am sure it is, it is certainly more so in grace, for when a man comes to the word of God and says, "Now I know theology beforehand; I do not come here to find my creed in the Bible and learn it like a child, but I come to turn texts about and make them fit into my system." Well, he will blind himself, and will be a fool, and it is right he should be blinded, for hath he not done that wilfully which must of necessity lead to such an end?

Brethren, simple teachableness is the first essential for the reception of a revelation from God, and if you have it to-day, if you are seeking after truth, if you are crying after her, and if you are willing that God should reveal her to you, if you are anxious that he should reveal truth to you in Christ, you are the sort of person upon whom God in sovereignty looks with divine favour, and unto such as you are will he reveal himself. What is wanted is faith, a childlike, receptive faith; not faith in a pope, not faith in a man, not faith in an old established creed, but

faith in God. Oh, my hearer, be thou willing to learn of him, and thou shalt not be left uninstructed.

Now a lesson or two, and I have done. The first lesson to be learnt is this. If great men, if eminent men, if so-called learned men, are not converted, do not be cast down about it,—it is not likely they will be. In the next place, if many converts are obscure persons, persons without note or name, do not be at all disgusted with that fact. Who are you that you should be? Who are you that you should despise any upon whom God has looked in favour? Rather rejoice exceedingly with your Lord that God hath chosen the despised, and you with them.

Next, learn that the sovereignty of God is always exercised in such a way that the pure in heart may always rejoice in it. God never did a sovereign act yet that the loving Christ himself could not rejoice in. Be you content, therefore, to leave everything in the hand of God that you do not understand, and when his way is in the sea, be quite as glad as when his way is in the sanctuary; when his footsteps are not known, feel that they are quite as righteous and quite as holy as when you can perceive the path in which he moves.

The ultimate honour of the gospel is secured unto God alone, let that be our last lesson. When the wind up of all things shall come there shall be no honour to any of us, nor would we desire it; but out of it all, out of the choice of each one, and out of the revelation made to each one, will come up, multiplied into a thousand thunders, the voice as of Christ in his whole mystical body, "I thank thee, O Father." This shall be the song of heaven concerning the whole matter, as well concerning the lost as the saved. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." There shall be no cavils amongst the pure in heart, nor questions among the perfected spirits, but the whole family reviewing the whole of the Father's government, the hiding as well as the revealing, shall at the last say, Christ leading the utterance,—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Brothers and sisters, let us learn our need of a personal revelation, let us seek it if we have not yet received it; with a childlike spirit, let us seek it in Christ, for he only can reveal the Father to us; and when we have it let it be our joy that we see him revealing it to others, and let this be our prayer, that the God of Jacob would yet bring others unto Christ, who shall rejoice in the light that has made glad our eyes. The Lord be with you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—97, 705, 219.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ALIVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 12TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live."—Psalm cxix. 144.

YESTERDAY afternoon I was the subject of a somewhat singular circumstance. An esteemed friend and relative came over to my house, evidently labouring under great disturbance of mind, and having enquiries to make of a very important order. I was at the time walking in the garden, so that I did not see him, and he appeared to have great difficulty in mentioning the subject of his concern to my wife. At last it came out that he had seen a gentleman who had informed him that it was generally rumoured that I had been taken ill with heart disease and had died in a very short time. My friend came to the point by cautious degrees, and asked at length if I was seriously ill. "No," was the joyful reply of my beloved, "he is much the same as usual." Then it was clear I was not dead, and the great fear was removed. The question was put, "Would you like to see him?" But my kind friend was perfectly satisfied, and was too full of joy to wish to linger; he would go back and answer with certainty the many enquiries which continued to be made at the Tabernacle. How the report originated I am quite at a loss to tell. It has evoked much kindness, but it is rather odd to feel called upon to assure your friends that you are yet alive; I can but show myself and ask my friends to see for themselves if I look like a dead man. When the peculiarity of the position had given place to other thoughts, it struck me in a solemn manner that the report might have been true, and my death will assuredly be a fact one day unless our Lord should come speedily. Only sparing mercy from God's right hand has prevented it being true at this moment. We do not realise our mortality unless we are startled into a recognition of it. We believe others to be mortal, and are not much surprised when they fall; but we have a secret notion that no axe will for the present be laid at our root. Yet reason would lead a man to say, "It happens to many suddenly to die, why should it not happen to me?" I regard the incident as a call to me to stand ready to depart at any time. Let it be a warning to you also to set your houses in order, for in a moment death may surprise you.

A practical lesson may be gathered from the very natural scene which

followed my friend's departure. I came in from my walk and found myself suddenly seized by my wife with both hands: grasping the front of my coat she turned me round and looked at me steadily with a most tender gaze, declaring that she must take a double look at me and hold me before her eyes, to be quite sure that her husband was yet alive, to her unutterable joy. This special outpouring of thankfulness might have been lost had it not been for the rumour, and so far it is well. May all of you be moved to the same feeling towards your dear ones whenever they come home at night alive. What would you do without them? What desolation would it cause in the house if a messenger hurriedly rushed into your house with the news of their sudden death! How we ought to love those who are spared to us, and to praise God to think they are still alive. Suppose they were suddenly removed; have we valued them rightly? Try and act towards them as you would act if you knew that they would die to-day. If husband or wife had died, what a sorrow it would be if an unkind word had been spoken, or a difference had arisen, just before the last look! What a painful cause for future regret! Let your affection to those about you gush forth freely as you reflect that God has spared them to you. Bless God, good woman, that you are a wife and not a widow! Bless God, Christian man, that you sit side by side with your dear spouse, and have not to go weeping to her grave. What a blank! What a darkness! What a gloom would come over your household if either of the parents should be suddenly taken away! Therefore, praise God and be thankful, and let us try to live towards one another, and towards our brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, in such a way as we should wish to have done if they were suddenly to be taken up. Pray for your pastor the more earnestly because you might this morning have missed him from your midst, and he will try and preach more earnestly to you because you may be gone before he will have another opportunity of addressing you. Let us continue knit together in love as long as we live; for the tie which now binds us together may soon be snapped. Out of a painful rumour may thus come a great blessing to families and congregations if it shall cause an increase of mutual love, and an outpouring of united gratitude for sparing mercies. So much for a lesson as to this mortal life.

By this incident I was further led to turn a heart-glance upon myself, and to say, "I wonder whether there is any question as to whether I am alive in the higher sense?" That I am alive as to my natural life is clear enough; but is my spiritual life equally evidenced? This is a very needful enquiry; for it is easy enough to make a fair show in the flesh and yet to be alienated from the life of God. Many abide in death, even as the apostle saith,—"To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." The enquiry came home to my own heart, and therefore I suggest it to yours, for it may profit you. Brethren, do you live unto God? Are you walking as those who are alive from the dead? Remember, my sisters, that it is written, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth:" may no woman here come under that condemnation! Brethren, I call upon you also to remember the word of the Lord Jesus to the church of Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Many exist upon the face of the earth, but into "*life*" they have never entered.

They know not the Spirit, and because they are strangers to his indwelling they live after the flesh, and mind the things of the flesh, and of these it is written, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." Ask ye then yourselves these questions,—have you been quickened from your death in trespasses and sins? and does the divine life beat within you in such a forceful and healthful manner that there can be no question about it? Is your life "hid with Christ in God," and are you numbered with the living in Zion? The living, the living, he shall praise thee, O God, as we do this day.

My subject is life, may the Lord of life help me to speak of it after a lively manner. A consideration of the text will help in the enquiry as to whether we live unto God or no; and it may further help those who sigh after the divine life to discover the way of divine quickening. Let us again read the text, "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live."

Here we have a touchingly humble prayer for life: "Give me understanding, and I shall live." We will first *consider this prayer in its simplicity;* secondly, I shall *try to open it up more fully;* and, thirdly, we will go deeper yet, and *search into the argument upon which the prayer is founded.* There is a something about God's testimonies which will impart and sustain life; hence the putting of the two sentences together: "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live."

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS PRAYER IN ITS SIMPLICITY. Without diving into its depths, let us see what lies upon its surface. This prayer is adapted for very general use. It would suit a child, and be equally becoming from a venerable father. It might fall from the lips of those in whom there is but the faintest sign of grace, and it might as fitly be used by those in whom grace is ripening into glory.

We ask you to notice, first, that this is a suitable prayer *for the awakened sinner.* He discovers himself to be guilty, and he perceives that there is a punishment for sin, and so far he understands his position. Alarmed by his conscience, he thinks he sees the Judge upon the great white throne about to pronounce the final sentence, and he knows what it must be, for it is written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die": so far he understands well enough. He hears, also, that there is life, life in Christ Jesus, life for guilty men; but his mind is much confused with many terrors, and with the horrible dread of the sure consequences of his sin. He has sufficient faith in the revelation of God to know that there is life in a look at the Crucified One; but he does not quite understand what that look means. He knows that there is salvation in one name and in no other; but he does not quite comprehend what that faith is which obtains for a sinner the virtue of that saving name. Then is his time to pray, "Give me understanding, and I shall live." He wants illumination for his darkened mind, that he may see the way of salvation and run therein; that he may look to Christ, and by understanding the doctrine of his substitutionary sacrifice may be enabled at once to trust in Jesus and live. Christ is our life; but we need understanding, or we shall miss it. It is a blessed understanding which enables a man to feel that though the sentence of death may be in his members, yet he must and shall live if he believes in the Lord Jesus.

What said the Lord Jesus himself in his prayer for his people? "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." I pray you, dear hearers, if you feel your need of this life, let the prayer of the text go up quietly from your hearts: "Give me understanding, and I shall live."

Equally applicable, however, will this be in the case of one who is *a Christian, and who is struggling against temptation.* Perhaps, my brother, you are placed in a position where you are fiercely tempted from without by the world, and possibly you may fear that you will not be able to survive it. It comes with such force that you are staggered by its power: you feel that you cannot bear up under such pressure: you despair of your spiritual life. Well, then, ask God to bring home his word to your hearts, that you may act wisely, and may meet the rebuke of the ungodly and the temptations of the wicked prudently, baffling the adversary by your sacred vigilance. Pray, "Give me understanding, and I shall live," for a clear understanding is needful for your preservation from the enemy. May God make you wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Possibly the temptation comes from within you. There are passions within you which at times violently rebel, and you are in anguish while you struggle to mortify them, though mortified they must be. Your soul abhors evil, and wrestles against the lustings of the flesh, agonizing that you may walk before God in integrity, pleasing him in all things. At times you are hardly beset, and Satan himself draws near to aid the flesh with his fearful insinuations, or even by injecting blasphemous thoughts. Then is your hour of peril, for you are pressed out of measure, while the enemy howls at you,—"The Lord hath forsaken you quite! Thy God will be gracious no more!" Ah! then you need to know how to handle your weapons, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and that master weapon of all-prayer. Perhaps you feel yourself so confused that you do not know what Scripture to plead in prayer, nor do you know what you should pray for as you ought. Well, then, remember the blessed word of Scripture, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Let this be your prayer: "Give me understanding, and I shall live, despite the assaults of the enemies." Though without be fightings and within be fears, we shall overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we shall live as Christian men, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, if the Lord will give us a clear understanding of his word, and holy prudence and judgment by which we shall know how to behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way.

Do you not think that this prayer will often well up from the heart of the *suffering believer?* To some of our dear brothers and sisters life is one long pang, for bodily disease has fixed its fangs in their flesh. There are others whose life is always from hand to mouth, and sometimes bread is scant in the cupboard, so that grinding poverty breaks them to dust. These are sore ills, as those know who have to bear them. Some, too, are subject to domestic trials, watching daily the pining away of one they love; or bereavement has followed bereavement till they seem left alone in the land. Alas, the insatiate archer has taken a poisoned arrow from his quiver yet again and again, and love has had to weep over the

terrible accuracy of his aim. Beloved ones, who have been called to suffer in these ways, have you not cried out at times, "I shall never be able to bear it; I shall die of a broken heart under these great afflictions. O that I might hide me in the grave"? You fear that you will perish if the pressure continues; but you will do no such thing. God will help you to bear your burden by sustaining your soul with heavenly meat that others know nothing of. If the load be not made lighter, the shoulders shall be made stronger, and this shall be done by your having a clearer understanding of the word of God, and a fuller experience of its supporting power. You do not so much need health, or wealth, or freedom from trouble, as more understanding of the Lord's mind and will in all the dispensations of his providence. Breathe, then, the prayer to your heavenly Father,—"Give me understanding, and I shall live." Grace can make us live like the three holy children in the fire, or like Jonah at the bottom of the sea, or like Daniel in a den of lions: it can make us patient in tribulation, and joyful in distress; but grace works by making us understand the word of the Lord. Brethren, if we are taught of the Lord, we can live between the jaws of death, and sing a song unto our Well-Beloved amid the wailings of famine and pestilence. By a God-given understanding we shall know that all things work together for our good, and so we shall "take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, and in distresses"; for when we are weak then are we strong.

I thank God that a large number now present are not so much sufferers as *workers*. Now, I know that you who are working for God and trying to win souls often feel as if you were not half alive. I am compelled to make such a confession personally. I want to get alive to the utmost; not only having life, but having it "more abundantly." I have some life in me, thank God; but I want it to quicken me more completely. Sometimes we get into a sleepy state, and then the spirit chides us, and we cry, "This will never do."

> "Dear Lord! and shall we ever live
> At this poor dying rate?
> Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
> And thine to us so great?"

We need quickening, brethren; do you not feel that it is so? I believe that those who are most earnest are the very persons who blame themselves the most for want of earnestness. When your whole soul is being consumed you feel as if you want the coals of juniper to be blown up to a yet more vehement flame, that you may go up like a cloud of incense unto God, dissolved in his service, consumed in his praise. Here, then, is our prayer, "Give me understanding and I shall live. Make me so to feel the power of thy word that I may be ardent, fervent, full of life." I will alter the poet's lines and say—

> "Lives of saintly men assure us
> We may make our lives sublime."

We can live to noble purpose if in answer to this prayer God the Holy Ghost shall teach us to profit, and give us understanding to know the will of the Lord, and obey it faithfully. O ye who would work successfully and acceptably, ask the great Lord of the harvest to enlighten your

hearts and minds, that you may not labour as in the dark, but as wise men, made expert by the Holy Ghost.

Is not this a very proper and blessed prayer for *aspiring minds* in the church of God, of whom I trust there are many present? Such men are not satisfied with themselves, but press forward to that which is yet beyond and above them. They have not reached that imaginary climax which some prattle of, who dote upon their fancied perfectness; but their motto is "Onward, Upward, Heavenward." These dwell on high, but their cry is "Higher, higher." They walk with God, and therefore say,

"Oh for a closer walk with God."

They are calm and happy, but yet they sigh for a still serener frame, they have power in prayer, but they long for more of a wrestling spirit, and for greater prevalence with God. If there be any here who are fired with such divine ambitions, what better prayer can they use than this, "Give me understanding, and I shall live"? For if God teach us rightly to use the divine word, so as to mark, learn, and inwardly digest it by the understanding, then shall we be nourished into complete manhood, and shall go from strength to strength! The new man is renewed in knowledge, and nourished by the truth, and "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Our prayer must be that the Lord would make us understand what he would have us do, and how to do it. Then shall we live when we are made of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," and ready in heart to perfect all his will. This will be an angelic life; for those holy beings do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. It will be a seraphic life; for as we burn with holy fervour we shall resemble those ministers whom God maketh to be a flaming fire. It will be a heavenly life; for we shall strive to do the Lord's will on earth as it is done in heaven. Do you long for this? The way to it is not to be found in dreams, and visions, and fanatical excitements, and delirious conceits, but in a calm, quiet, solid, and deep understanding of the revealed word of God. Our Lord prayed,—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." No other means are needed for the fullest development of holiness: you only require the word to be unveiled by the Spirit to your mind and understanding, and in the utmost sense of the term you shall "live."

Last of all, when we shall not be so much aspiring saints as *expiring saints*,—when we come to lie upon our last bed, and to look into the unseen, then may we still pray after the same fashion. When the eye shall begin to open to the light of heaven, and things but darkly seen before grow clearer in the dawn of the eternal day; when the songs of angels begin to break upon the opening ears of the soul, and heaven is drawing near, for grace is ripening into glory, and glory is coming to welcome its heir,—then may we pray to live through the understanding and experience of the divine word. How blessed it will be to have such an understanding of divine realities that we shall stay ourselves upon the promises, shall rejoice in the everlasting covenant, and derive strong consolation from the oath of God. How blessed, then, to understand our living union with our risen Lord, and to know the experience of the

happy psalmist when he sang,—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." With God's Spirit within us lighting up the soul by the understanding of the fact that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, we shall live in the midst of death, and find our Saviour's word to be true: "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." We shall ford that shallow stream of death, which, while it chills our feet, shall not be able to chill our hearts; it may stop our pulse, but it shall not silence our song, which shall rise higher and higher as speech shall fail. We shall but shut our eyes on earth, and open them in heaven, for God who has given us understanding here below shall surely give us to dwell above where they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.

Thus, I think I have shown you that this prayer sounds well on every note of the scale. You may sound it out of the depths of seeking penitence, and you may run up to the very highest note with the expectancy of glory, and the word will sound well on any note you touch. From the wicket-gate of humble faith up to the gate of pearl which admits into the golden city you may go on praying, "Give me understanding, and I shall live."

II. The time is come when under our second division THE PRAYER IS TO BE MORE FULLY OPENED UP. "Give me understanding, and I shall live." Here is *a want confessed* because it is deeply felt; the suppliant owns his need of understanding. Has that want been felt by you, my brother? It certainly exists, "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." The wittiest, wisest, best instructed man who has only human learning, if he knows not God, has reached no further than that acme of all carnal wisdom spelt in four letters, "FOOL." We are all fools till God gives us understanding. A sense of our own folly is the door-step of all wisdom. To cry out after understanding proves that we have already received some understanding; for, mark you, this text of mine is the prayer of a man of God. I suppose the hundred-and-nineteenth is David's psalm, at any rate it is the psalm of a very gracious Spirit-taught man, and you see he cries, even though he has understanding in a measure, still "Give me understanding." He that is taught of God is the man that asks to be taught of God, and she who has chosen the good part is the woman who sits at Jesus' feet to hear his words. It is the mark of a wise man that he does not think himself so, and that he continues to pray "Give me understanding." It is true of us all, that apart from the gift of God by his Spirit we are without understanding, and as naturally go astray as silly sheep. Note this fact, and be well persuaded of it, that you may pray with the greater earnestness.

Next, *the prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free grace.* He prays, "*Give* me understanding": it must be a gift from God. The prayer is directed to God, for God alone can give understanding. Teachers can enlighten an understanding which already exists, but they cannot give one. Masters and instructors can profit nothing till we have an understanding with which to receive knowledge aright. Any man who is taught in the Word can teach us the letter of Scripture; but no man can give us an inner understanding of its spirit; that must be a revelation, and it must

be wrought in us by him that made the light and the sun, or we shall never come to an understanding of the Word. Let it always be known that all light is from the Lord Jesus himself: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." All real understanding of the word of God must come to us as it did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, of whom it is written, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." The author of the sacred volume must himself expound it to the heart and understanding, or we shall be rather blinded by its light than made to see thereby. David prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," and we must pray the same. When the Lord graciously hears our supplication we must take care to give him all the praise and glory of the work, for it will be a deed of grace, and grace alone. If he left us in darkness we could not complain, for we have refused the light, and if he opens our eyes we must glorify his mercy, and cry, "Blessed be the Lord who hath showed us light."

Brethren, the Psalmist speaks of *understanding in a general way*—"Give me understanding"—as if he wanted the faculty for use in many directions. In every transaction of this life we need to be prudent, for we are surrounded by a thousand snares and pitfalls, and if we do not exercise discretion we shall be taken all unawares and become the prey of our enemies. We bear within our own natures so much to confuse and confound and entangle that if we are not taught prudence and understanding we shall certainly never escape from the mischief that is within us. We are frequently like men in a fog, who cannot tell where they are. It happened but the other day near Milan that so dense a fog covered the railway that a number of workmen who were employed upon the line heard the sound of an approaching luggage train and rushed to get away from it; but at that very same moment an express train, which they had not heard or seen, came rushing upon them, and cut them to pieces. Such is our condition at times: we try to get away from one temptation and we fall into another; we hope to escape one form of evil and we rush into another. Haste breeds heedlessness, and warmth of zeal is apt to beget indiscretion, so that we daily need a good share of understanding as a ballast to our sail. A Christian man should be a sensible man, a man with all his wits about him. He needs to possess the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs as well as the devotion of the Psalms and the rapture of Solomon's Song. Those books are placed together in the Bible as if to show that they ought to be read together, and that their spirit and influence are essential to a complete practical character. I would have you bow your ear to the voice of your Well-Beloved, but you must also be ready to deal with the voices of everyday life. It is one of the objects of true religion to give subtlety to the simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion. We must not be ignorant of the devices of the devil, nor childish in yielding credence to the falsehoods of men. We need in all the walks of life to exercise understanding; and, thank God, we may learn to do so, for the Scripture saith, "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints."

Still, while the understanding sought for in the prayer is evidently of a general character, the former portion of the verse links it with *a special understanding* of the word of God; and, oh, beloved, we need above all things to understand what God has revealed. Take care first that you *know* it. Search the Scriptures, let them be the man of your right hand. Prevent the nightwatches while you search them; prevent the dawn of the day by meditating upon them. Be ye scribes well instructed in the law of the Lord. Next, *believe* the divine revelation. Be it your prayer that you may so understand the Lord's statutes as fully to accept them by faith. Believe the teachings of the word as realities, not locking them up in the dark dungeon of a forgotten creed, but making them bright realities in the life and liberty of your Christian action, and full of influence upon every movement of your mind. Knowing and believing, it will be time to advance to *meditation*. Consider the words of God; weigh them, test them, dive into them. The richest ore lies deepest. There may be sands of gold sparkling upon the surface of the Bible, but the great nuggets are reserved for those who dig deep both by day and by night. Consider well the words of eternal life, and then go on to *obey* their teaching. You will never have an understanding of the Word unless you practise it. He who doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine. We know nothing aright till our hearts come into complete subjection to the Spirit. Oh for such an understanding as this, that the inner life may be nourished to fulness of stature by feeding on bread from heaven. To this must be added *experience*, for who understands the word till he has experienced its truth and power? But what a blessed knowledge of a promise you receive when it is fulfilled to you! How you understand the reality of prayer when you have received an answer. How you know the meaning of communion with Christ when your face shines with having seen him! How you understand the secret consolations of the Holy Ghost when in deep water you have felt their wondrously uplifting power!

This prayer means so much that in one sermon I cannot open it all up to you; nor, indeed, could I do so were a lifetime at my disposal. O Lord, give us understanding to know, to believe, to consider, to practise, and to experience thy Word! Let each man cry, "O God, give me this, and then I shall truly live!" I think you will begin to see what a connection there is between all this and the testimonies of the Lord, for the righteousness of the divine word is to be transcribed into the letter of our daily life, if we are to live to the full.

Permit me now to say that no man who is at all awakened can really live unless he knows the word of God and understands its inner meaning. For this reason: Do you call it life to live without *light*? You may have been in the sepulchral dungeons of Venice, where not a ray of light ever came to the unhappy prisoner. To linger there, do you call that life? To live without the light of God is just such an existence. We have heard of men who have been immured in dungeons for forty years, wearing constantly the manacles, never breathing the fresh air,—do you call that life? Can there be "life" where there is no *liberty*? Alas, some men have never been free, but have remained captives to their lusts, never

knowing the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Call you such bondage life? Another essential of life is *love*. To have nobody to love, and nobody to love you,—is that life? Yet many a soul feels that it cannot be contented with earthly love, and if it has not the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit, it is loveless. Call you that life? Infinite love is a necessity of an immortal spirit. Without light, without liberty, without love there is no life. But more, many men exist without *peace*, driven to and fro like a sere leaf by the tempest. Never resting, they are as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Call you that life? "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Is that life? And then to have no *grand object*, no object worthy of yourself—to be living in this world merely to get enough bread and cheese to eat, just keeping yourself breathing and your family breathing—is that life? No heavenly object, no ambition worthy of an immortal spirit, do you call that life? Death before you, which you dare not think of! No *hope*, unless it be the ghastly figment of annihilation! Dreadful hope! To me a thought most horrible! To live without hope is not life; far rather call it death. Lord, give me understanding of thy everlasting testimonies, then I shall live, but I shall never live till thou dost grant me this boon.

III. Now we will take the third step and go deeper, LAYING BARE THE ARGUMENT OF THIS PRAYER. What does he mean by saying, "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live"? I think he means this—that the word of God when it is practically and experimentally understood by the mind is *a pledge of life*. Do you think that God would take one of us to be his child and teach us his word, and then after all permit us to be condemned to die? Is that his fashion? Did you ever hear of a judge who instructed a criminal in the arts and sciences laboriously for years with the view of executing him when the task was done? Nothing of the sort. If the Lord has taught you it is because the Lord has bought you, and he will not lose the purchase of his blood. If the Lord has taught you it is because he means to take you where your education will be completed, to take you home to dwell with himself above. "Give me understanding, and I shall live": I am quite clear about that. If thou, great God, hast made me understand the evil of sin, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, the power of thy Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, if thou hast made me experimentally to understand this, I know I shall live, for thou wilt not make me ashamed of my hope.

> "Can he have taught me to trust in his name,
> And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

The next argument is this, an understanding of the word of God is life, because we are told that the word of God is the "living and incorruptible *seed* which liveth and abideth for ever." Very well, then, if that seed is sown in my heart, my heart must live for ever. There can be no death where the seed is incorruptible. If the word of the Lord be living within us, then there is within us a life eternal. Be ye sure of this, then—if you have enjoyed a vital experience of God's word, you have within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Furthermore, the word of God is not only the seed of life, but it is *the food of life.* "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live": and if you live on the word that cometh out of God's mouth you cannot die. How can you? For in the word you read of the "flesh," which is "meat indeed," and that "blood" which is "drink indeed;" and the Incarnate Word himself hath said, "He that eateth me, the same shall live by me. Because I live, ye shall live also." There is forcible argument here.

Once more, the understanding of God's word is *the very flower and crown and glory of true life.* When a man so understands God's word as to experience it, and to practise it, he has reached a high point of spiritual culture, and his life will be loaded, like Aaron's rod, with buds and blossoms and fruit unto God's glory. He will be such a man that he shall only need to take one step and be in heaven. He is a shock of corn fully ripe, each single stalk bowing its head towards the earth as if it asked to be ingathered. Let us pray God to give us an understanding of his blessed word, for then we shall be ripe for glory, and in the highest sense it will be true that we shall "live."

I have scarcely a minute to spare, but I must venture to detain you while we observe that the Psalmist alludes to one point in reference to God's word which is to us the very marrow and fatness of the whole. God's word is said to be *righteous,*—"The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting." Now, upon this righteousness the life of every Christian hangs. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." A righteous God cannot destroy a man in whom his grace has wrought an understanding of his word, for that were to deal unrighteously with him, since he is justified by the knowledge of Christ. The godly serve a just God and a Saviour, and hence they have nothing to fear.

This righteousness of God's word is so certain that it is said to be *everlasting.* Brethren, my life hangs on the everlastingness of all God's word. If it can change then must I die; but if it cannot change then shall I live. The righteousness of God, according to the text, is everlasting, since none can challenge it. No caviller will ever prove God's way of salvation, or of providence, to be unrighteous. If that could be done then the believer might die, but since that righteousness cannot be disproved, he shall live. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" The divine righteousness stands fast for ever and ever, settled in heaven, ordained to answer all demands throughout all ages. Let us so understand it as to take it to be ours, and we shall live.

I cannot make out the notion of certain professing Christians, that a change comes over Christianity as the ages move on; that there is a Christianity for the first century, and a revised Christianity for the present era. We have become very enlightened of late! You are aware that this is the marvellous nineteenth century. We have invented the electric light, and none can deny that we are the most enlightened people that ever lived on the face of the earth! It is not, of course, pride on our part to say so, for we are very modest. Among us there are men who are wonderfully brilliant—Paul was but a farthing candle compared with them. They understand by culture and thought so much

that it is an honour to speak with them. The gospel that was preached to the poor, which childlike persons understood by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, is in their eyes a very poor business. They sneer and turn up their cultured noses at what they call "the simple gospel," as if a simple gospel was meant for simpletons. Well, now, to my mind, this is the very bliss and blessedness of the gospel, that the righteousness of God's testimonies is everlasting, that though it has been tried by criticism and tested by experience, it remains the same in its spotless purity and in its divine infallibility to this day. If God should be pleased to lengthen out the life of any one of you till you are as old as Methusaleh, you will not have to say, "I must die now, for the gospel is worn out. I must perish now, for the righteousness of the word of God has been disproved." Thus saith Jehovah, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We may catch the echo of his proclamation, and say, "Because the word which reveals our God never changes, therefore we shall live."

Do you want a better gospel, any of you? Go and fish for it, if you do, but not in the waters of truth. Do you want any nobler promise, any surer covenant? Wander through the deserts of salt till your skeleton lies bleaching there, for that will be your sole reward if you turn away from the feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined. As for me, I bless God that the righteousness of his testimonies is everlasting, and by them I mean to abide all my days, God helping me.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 119 (Song I.), 229.

Just Published. Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"In this most entertaining volume Mr. Spurgeon has desired to 'smite evil' (which he has done very effectively) and to commend goodness. He does not claim originality for his Pictures, but if they be not original the amount of quaintness and freshness which they possess are such as fully to equal that much esteemed quality. Under the heading of thirty-eight proverbial sayings Mr. Spurgeon pours forth a stream of instruction, remonstrance, fun, humour, good advice, wise reflections, and innocent chaff."—*The Record.*

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BAD LODGERS, AND HOW TO TREAT THEM.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—Jeremiah iv. 14.

ONE notices in reading such a chapter as this fourth of Jeremiah that the change which God required in the Jewish people was a very deep and thorough one. It was not only the washing of their hands, nor the cleansing of their outward lives, but the washing of their hearts from wickedness; and the Lord did not alone require of them that they should cease from wicked actions, but even from vain thoughts. The like demand he makes of us, for he saith by the mouth of his servant James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." This makes our holy religion such a weighty and solemn business. If it were wholly a matter of outward ordinances, we might take the child and sprinkle it, or might bring the adult and plunge him; or we might admit all to a table where they should eat and drink such consecrated materials as should save them. This would be all easy enough, and hence men cling to a religion of ceremonies; for heart religion is troublesome, and the ungodly cannot endure it. Ritualism is the most popular religion in the world, because it is all "Hi! Presto!" Done in a minute—nothing to think of, nothing to care about, nothing to sorrow over. It is all a mere matter of form, which men leave to their priests, as they leave their deeds to be drawn up by their lawyers, and their physic to be prescribed by their doctors. The little that is wanted of them can be done without thought, and they can go on in their sins as pleasantly as ever.

Next to that in popularity is the religion of mere morality. "Yes, we know we do amiss: we will amend. Gross vices shall be lopped off as stray branches that run over a wall. We will at once purge ourselves from everything for which our fellow-men would blame us. Is not that enough?" Many hope it is, and live as if they felt sure it was. But the religion of the Word of God is not so. It is, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments:" hence ceremonies are not enough "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all

thy mind, and with all thy strength:" hence outward actions are not enough. This is too hard a demand; and as for repentance and faith, the ungodly cannot enter upon such spiritual duties for they have no mind to them. The carnal mind hates the mention of spiritual things.

This, I take it, while it makes the Christian religion so solemn, throws us back upon one of its great first principles—that salvation must be of grace; because if it be necessary that my heart must be changed, can I change it? I am bidden to do so. I am told in such a text as this to wash my heart from wickedness. But how can I do it? Shall a fountain purge itself? It has sent forth bitter waters, bitter as Marah; can it of itself do the reverse? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" That would be a very simple business, for skin and spots are outside things; but how shall a man change his heart—his very nature? Do you expect the crabtree to change itself into a sweet apple-bearing tree? Will you go and talk—to come back to the former metaphor—to the waters of Marah and expect them to change themselves into the sweet wells of Elim? No; this is the finger of God. If ever this is done God must interfere. It is a rule that nature can only rise as high as nature. Put water where you please, it will rise up to where it started from; but, except under pressure, it will rise no higher; and you shall not find man rising above his fallen and depraved nature. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Out of the grave there comes not life. Out of an unclean thing there comes not a clean thing. We must be born from above if ever we are born aright. We must be new created by the Creator himself, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else up to the mark which God's law requires we can never come. "Wash thine heart." Oh, God, how can I wash my heart? Though I take to myself snow water, and make myself seem outwardly never so clean, yet what have I done with my heart? Thou biddest me drive out my thoughts; but, O my God, my thoughts often come against my will, and sometimes *with* my will, and I am tossed about by them as a poor sea shell by the restless waves of the sea. They compass me about like bees; yea, they compass me about, these vain thoughts of mine, like bees which sting my good desires to death. Like flies of summer they buzz about my ears and fill my mind with corruption, and they will not be driven away. I can no more resist them than Jannes and Jambres could withstand the Egyptian plague. Oh, how can I purge out vain thoughts? Whither shall I turn for strength to perform this necessary duty?

"By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." And what ye cannot do, in that ye are weak through the flesh, God can do for you, and his divine Spirit will sweetly enable you to perform all duties which he requires of you. If ye be willing and obedient, and yield yourselves up to the blessed gospel of the grace of God, he will make you clean; and your thoughts, too, shall be purged as with fire, till they shall rise like a sweet incense unto him. Let this word at the outset encourage any person who may be inclined to say before I have done, "It is a hard saying: who can bear it?"

Now to our text, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Bad lodgers. Some people have admitted bad lodgers into their chambers. I have known a good many people troubled with them;

and there is no use in keeping them; they must be sent adrift. So the text says, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" It means that we must not be slow to give them notice to quit, for they ought not to be tolerated in the human breast.

First, let me *name some of these lodgers;* secondly, let me *show what bad lodgers they are;* and, thirdly, let me give you *some advice as to how to get rid of them.* May the Holy Spirit also come and bless this word to their immediate ejectment, and may a stronger than they come and dwell for ever in you, not as a lodger, but as Lord and owner of your whole being.

I. First, then, HERE ARE CERTAIN BAD LODGERS; and I should not wonder if some people here have found and furnished chambers in their hearts and heads for these mischievous tenants whose name is "vain thoughts."

Many thoughts may be called vain because they are *proud, conceited thoughts.* Thus, whenever a man thinks himself good by nature, we may say of his thoughts, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." If you are unrenewed, and dream that you are better than others because your parents were godly, it is a vain thought. If you have never been born again by the Spirit of God, and are trusting in your infant baptism, it is a vain thought. If you have never come to believe in Jesus, but think yourself very good because you are a respectable person and regularly attend a place of worship, it is a vain thought. If you have got it into your head that when we talk about sinners we do not mean *you,* and that when God's word condemns men for their sins it leaves a loophole of escape for you, it is a vain thought. If you have an idea that you do not need to come to Christ as a poor, helpless sinner; that you do not want the same kind of change as others; that, indeed, there is a private way to heaven for you, and you have found the silver key of it, you have made a mistake—it is a vain thought. You will have to be born again, or else if you are not born twice you will die twice. You will have to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, or you will die in your sins. You will have to come crying to him for mercy, and to find everything in him, or you will remain under condemnation and perish in your iniquity. If you think not so, it is a vain thought. Every thought of self-righteousness is a vain thought; every idea, moreover, of self-power —that you can do this and do that towards your own salvation, and that at any time when it pleases you you can turn and become a Christian, and so there is no need to be in a hurry, or to seek the help of the Holy Spirit:—that also is a vain thought. To reckon yourself to be anything more than a mass of sin and helplessness is a vain thought. You have misconceived your own true value and your condition before God.

Now, perhaps I speak to some here who really are very nice sort of people, at least they feel they are, for they go to a place of worship where they are not often spoken to very personally; and if the minister does speak pointedly, they say, "I do not think he has any right to talk in that way; people should be charitable." It is supposed to be charitable, you know, to allow people to go down to hell without warning them. My charity leads me to try as far as ever I can to break up all shams, and I am sure that self-righteousness is all a sham, a deadly delusion, a

destructive error. It is ruining tens of thousands of people—good, quiet, harmless, inoffensive people—people, too, that are generous in their business, and kind, and all that, and who therefore conclude that they are safe for time and eternity. They say, "Well, now, I don't know that I have done anything so very wrong; I do not see that I need repentance and faith, or that I need come as that poor thief did on the cross, and just look to Christ and say, 'Lord, remember me.'" Dear friend, I must address you in the language of the text, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" for they are all vain, every one of them. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" in the sight of God. The way to heaven is not by our fancied works of righteousness; but salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Another sort of vain thoughts may be ranged under the head of *carnal security*. The poet says, "All men think all men mortal but themselves," and often as the saying is quoted never was a proverb more generally true. We are surprised to hear that So-and-so, who was well and hearty three days ago, is dead: we are quite taken aback for the moment, but we never dream that it will happen to ourselves. We are alarmed when we hear that a person who was sitting near to us in the pew on Sunday is now in his coffin; but we indulge the hope that we shall see old age. A person the other day who was consumptive died suddenly of hemorrhage of the lungs, and yet another consumptive person says, "This sad thing does happen to invalids whose lungs are diseased, but I do not suppose it will ever befall me." Men go out to their daily business and they say, "Many that wake this morning will never see the sun go down"; but they themselves talk of what they will do in the evening, as if they were sure of surviving. There is no hint of, "If the Lord will, we shall do this or that." We know all of us that life is very uncertain, yet multitudes are hazarding their souls upon the uncertainty of that life, under an inward belief which they would not dare to express, that somehow or other they are sure not to die just yet. What is such security but a vain thought? Does it not strike you, dear friends, when a man is eighty, eighty-eight, ninety, that surely he cannot expect to get through another year? As a reasonable man he must reckon that he is soon to die. Not at all. He is often the man who thinks least about death, and if you introduce the topic he does not like the conversation and starts you on another tack. Many who are younger than they do not like you to mention anything about advanced age or growing old. You must talk of these old sheep as if they were still lambs, or they will not like it: speak plain truth about their years, and they are offended. If you want an old man to move quickly out of the road when you are driving always cry, "Move on, my lad," and he feels complimented, and moves directly, because there is in him a joy in being thought young, and an aversion to the idea of his being old. This is ridiculous. You smile, and you may well smile, for it is a folly, but yet how common a folly. Why, when a man is of ripe age, or a woman either, why should they not know it and let it be known? Why should they not number their days and keep the reckoning before their own minds? If all things are right with you and me, the older we are the better. Some one said to a Christian man, "What is your age?" and he replied, "I am on the right side of seventy." They found out that he was seventy-five, and they said, "You told us you were on the

right side of seventy." "So I am," he answered; "that is the right side, for it is the side which is nearest heaven, my blessed home." Why should not all Christians think so? They do think so when they judge rightly; for they joyfully sing—

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

If a day's march is worth singing about, is not a year's journey nearer home a theme for still greater delight? Should we try to make out that we have so much longer to stay in exile—so much longer ere we shall see the face of the Well-Beloved—so much longer ere, like heirs that have come at age, we shall enter on our divine inheritance?

My hearers, drive out these vain thoughts about not dying? I will lead the way for you. I am as likely to die to-night as any other man upon the face of this earth. You, too, my friend, may as likely never see another Sunday as anyone else. You tell me, you do not know that you have any special disease, and, indeed, I hope you have not; but we all carry something about us in which death can fix his arrow. Depend upon it that the seeds of mortality are in every constitution. I have met with one man—nay, with two men—who do not believe that they shall die; but as they get very much older, and one of them stoops very much, I am under the impression that they will die: and I pray anybody here who thinks that such an idea is a folly to remember that it is a minor form of the same folly to say, "I shall not die just yet." You may as well say, "I shall not die at all," for it leads to the same practical conclusion; death at a distance influences us very little more than no death at all. You may die at any moment; and what, my dear hearer, if at this moment while seated in that pew your naked spirit were suddenly to find itself at the bar of God? What would become of you? I charge you by the living God, and by your care about your own soul, do let that thought pass through your mind;—it is a vain thought for me to suppose that I shall have a ten minutes longer life; it is a vain thought to grant myself a lease for another week, for I am a tenant-at-will, and I may be ejected in a moment, so let me get rid of the folly and vanity of carnal security. At this moment the Holy Spirit saith to any one of you who may be presuming upon long life,—"How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

I know another set of thoughts: they are better looking, but they are equally vain, for they promise much and come to nothing: they are vain because they are *fruitless*. These vain thoughts are like the better order of people in Jerusalem—good people after a sort—that is to say, they really thought that as God threatened them with judgments, they would turn to him. Certainly they would. They had no intention of being hard-hearted. Far from it; they owned the power of the prophet's appeal; they felt a degree of awe in the presence of the just God as he threatened them, and of course they meant—they meant to wash their hearts, and they meant to put away all their forbidden practices; not just yet, but by-and-by. They would not wait very long: of course not. A long delay would be very dangerous, but they might safely tarry a little

longer. They had an engagement which would take them into worldly company, and so they must wait till that was over; and they had formed close connections which they could not very well break, and so religion must be regretfully postponed for a more convenient season. They were engrossed in a certain business which they could not easily get out of for a term of years; but they would—oh, they would—certainly; certainly they would attend to God and their souls. Though they did not say so in words, yet their faces appealed to the preacher pleadingly,—"Do not press us too much just now. We are honest people; we acknowledge the bill. Let it run a little longer. We do not mean to break away from the demands of God by any manner of means; we quite intend to comply with them at a near date, but not to-day. Oh, no, we do not deny the Scriptures: do not think that we are infidels. We do not doubt the love of Christ to men, or the power of his gospel; we hope to feel it in a little while." They mean to enjoy the love of God one of these days, and they hope to wind up their lives in a saintly manner. They feel rather pleased with themselves because they are so good as to resolve; if it be not virtue itself which they possess, yet the resolve to possess it flatters them into great notions of themselves. It is a great deal to be able to get so far as good resolutions, so they think. Well, now, my friend, has not that been the style of your thought for a great many years? Did not you think like that when you were a child—when you were yet fresh to the ways of religion, and had not yet learned so much of other ways as you have now? Do you not remember those early impressions—those tears at night, those childlike cries to Jesus, your mother's Saviour? Yes, you do recollect them: and there were times not so very long ago when all came back to you, and you sat in the house of God trembling, and wishing you could get to your chamber and bow your knees in prayer. You were on the borders of Immanuel's land, and there was only a step between you and life. You wished that the step was taken, but, still—well, there was a reason why it should not be taken *just yet:* and so you dared to bid the Lord wait your leisure, as if he were a beggar at your door to whom you were under no obligation. Alas for this constant delaying! Where will it land you? I see upon your head the signs of age, but you are not yet born to God. Your eyes are failing, you want spectacles; but you have not yet looked unto Jesus. Years have followed years, and the record of your sin is a long roll written on both sides, and you are resolving still, and making up your mind still, to something very good—still hoping that the right time is coming, only you must wait a little longer.

Now, the Lord says, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" for they are all vain—these delays, these false promises, these self-deceptions. How long shall it be that they shall throng the avenues of your soul and curse your spirit?

In some, who I hope are saved, their vain thoughts lie in a similar direction: they trust that they have believed, but they are slow to obey their Lord in publicly avowing their discipleship. They know that the gospel has two precepts—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," or, in other words, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." They resolve that they will one of these days make a confession of their faith; such is their fixed

ıtention, but the time is not yet come, for at present they are filled with uestionings as to their condition. They once felt sure that they had ıith. Had they confessed it then, that certainty might have connued. They have so long kept in abeyance their obedience to ıeir Lord that they begin now to question, and perhaps rightly, hether they have really believed. The Lord Jesus has said, "He ıat confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father hich is in heaven." But, then, somebody would laugh at them: they ould have a cross to carry, and this hinders them, and they postpone bedience to an indefinite period. Jesus Christ says, "He that taketh ot up his cross, and followeth not after me, is not worthy of me"; ut they mean if they can to find a by-path, so as not to go along the ing's highway and pay toll at the gates, or be met by the king's officers, : be seen by the king's enemies. They will, if they can, creep under a edge when the battle begins, and so escape the perils of the fight. heir religion gives them the courage of a rat behind the wainscot, and o more. They do not come out except it is at night, when nobody sees ıem. But this cowardice is not intended to last for ever: they are oing to be very brave one of these days: you shall see them performing reat exploits. They intend before very long openly to say, "I am on ıe Lord's side"; they will come forward and display their colours; ıey will be the bravest of the brave; only not just yet. Another time ır seeing the church-officers with reference to union with the church will ass away, and another, and another, and yet they will be no nearer the oint of decision. Their resolutions are vain thoughts, and so I put the ıestion, "How long?" Do fix some time or other. Do not for ever ımain a trifler with God, and his church, and his command. "How ng shall thy vain thoughts"—thy ineffectual promises of obedience to hrist—"lodge within thee?"

Now, I shall come closely home to some here whom I love in the Lord I say that resolutions to be very useful, prayerful, and holy are often ttle better than vain thoughts, because they are encumbered with pro-astination. There are many who love the Lord, who have never done ıuch for him because the time of figs is not yet. Leaves, and leaves only, ave they produced. They are live branches of the vine, although they ave not brought forth many grapes; but they cheer themselves with ıe persuasion, that one of these days—they do not know quite when—ıey will bring forth clusters as famous as those of Eshcol, though hitherto ıey have been poor specimens of Christian professors; their mind is made p to rise to a higher life; they will grow in grace; they will give ore time to Bible-reading and prayer; they will live nearer to God; ıey will grow quite strong Christians; and when that happens then ıey are going to do some great thing—I do not know quite what form ıeir resolution is to take; but they will do something extraordinary. hey will enter the Sunday-school and bring scores of little children to the aviour's feet. They will commence a class for young men: the class is re to grow, and out of it many will come to build up the church of God. hey will become fathers or mothers in Israel, and their children will many: or they are going to preach at the village stations, draw large ngregations, and lead hundreds to the Saviour. They are going to serve the Lord by personal exertion, or to give to the cause of God

very largely of their substance. It has been on their hearts a long time to be bountiful benefactors to the poor, to the church at home, and to missionaries abroad. They have not given much yet; but before long they intend to overflow like gushing fountains which send forth rivers of water. They are resolving: when will they come to acting? Dear brothers and sisters, if we had any of us done about half what we thought we should do, we should have been tolerably fruitful branches of the vine; but we spend so much of our time in this proposing, and then proposing again, that we have little left for the actual performance of anything. We dream with our eyes open, not at night when we are asleep, and are being really refreshed, but in the day when our dreaming does no good, but merely flatters us into a good opinion of ourselves. These are vain thoughts, for the Lord deserves to be really served. Not with imaginary blood were you redeemed; nor with imaginary fruit can you reward your Saviour's love. Not with imaginary woes, nor with a painted death upon a painted cross, did Christ ransom us from hell, and do we think to reward him with proposals, and plans, and schemes, and fancies, and hopes, and resolves? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Some men brood so long over their future intentions that they all of them become addled eggs, and nothing whatever is hatched. O man, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it," do it, do it "with thy might." Do not leave it for somebody else to do when you are dead. Many make up their minds that a great thing shall be done—when they die. When they cannot hold their money any longer, then they will give it up—a wonderful sacrifice to God! but he that would serve God acceptably determines, "I will give him of my substance while it is mine, and not when it is my heir's." My dear friend, I would have you regret your idleness. It is infinitely better to get to work, and perform the little which you are able to do; to give the Lord your service while you can serve him than that you should have to lie upstairs trying to amuse yourself or quiet the upbraidings of a guilty conscience by proposing to do great things, which you could not accomplish if you were to set about them, and which, indeed, you will never even so much as attempt.

I have thus mentioned to you several groups of bad lodgers, of whom the text says, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" "How long," says God to every Christian here that has loitered, lingered, hesitated—"how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Perform at once the doing of that which you have resolved, if indeed the resolve is such as you ought to have made. God help you by his sacred Spirit to lead a practical life, and not a dreamy one.

II. Now, secondly, let me show WHAT BAD LODGERS THEY ARE. Vain thoughts get admittance into our heads and hearts, and there they make themselves at home, and do mischief without end. They run upstairs and downstairs, and all over the house, and they multiply every day; but they are dreadful pests, the worst lodgers the soul can harbour.

For, first, they are *deceitful*. The man that says, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee," does not send for Paul any more: he never intended to do so. A man says, "To-morrow"; but to-morrow never comes. When that comes which would have been "to-morrow" it is "to-day"; and then he cries, "To-morrow," and so

multiplies lies before God. What deceptiveness it is on the part of any man who knows to do good and does it not, that he should think to put off God with empty promises. Now, listen to that: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "Sin." That is God's word, not mine. But you ask me, "To him that knoweth to do good, and truly intends to do it, does not the intention remove the sin?" I answer decidedly, No. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." So long as he refuses to do what he knows to be right he is sinning, and every minute that he delays heaps up another sin, and so the sin multiplies like money that is borrowed at compound interest; the amount of guilt runs up, and you never know what it comes to. Delay in performing duty is the most mischievous evil, doing infinite damage to the heart in which it lodges, because it defiles it with falsehood upon falsehood, and thus provokes the Most High. Oh, I would turn such a lodger as that out. David said, "He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my house." Do not suffer these vain thoughts to lodge a day longer; for they disgrace you, and place you in jeopardy.

Vain thoughts are bad lodgers, for they *pay no rent;* they bring in nothing good to those who entertain them. There is the lodger of self-righteousness, for instance: what good does self-righteousness ever do to the man who entertains it? It pretends to pay in brass farthings: it pretends to pay, but the money is counterfeit. What good does it do to any man to harbour in his mind the empty promise of future repentance? It often prevents repentance. I would rather hear a man say straight out, "Now, look here: I never mean to repent or believe, my mind is made up as to that matter." This, at least, is truthful: that man will, perhaps, change his mind, or God will change it. But that other man—the soft, putty-like being, the india-rubber man, squeeze him; pull him out; force him together again; do what you will with him; he gets back into his old shape. There is no solid stuff in him; you cannot make anything of him. These irresolute men, "unstable as water," cannot excel; they are neither good for use nor for ornament; and we have plenty of this class: are you one of them, my friend? If so, God help you to get rid of these bad lodgers of instability, self-sufficiency, and constantly promising, because they pay no rent. And so you Christian people who are always on the verge of being splendid, you members of churches who are always going to be generous, who are quite certain that you shall be useful, only you never are, what profit has ever come to God or yourself from this continued hesitation? Let such a lodger as that depart at once, for the longer he lingers the more will you lose by him.

The next reason for the ejectment of these lodgers is this: that they are *wasting your goods and destroying your property.* For instance, every unacted resolution wastes time, and that is more precious than gold. It also wastes thought, for to think of a thing and to leave it undone is a waste of reflection. It is a waste of energy to be energetic about merely promising to be energetic; it is a great waste of strength to be for ever resolving to be strong, and yet to remain weak. You screw yourself up to the sticking-point, and you are going to be holy, and yet never are so; you mean to turn to God, and yet never do. Why, you are wasting time; you are wasting thought; you are wasting opportunity; you are wasting

the gospel under which you sit. These bad lodgers are causing you such daily loss that before long you will be utterly ruined unless you can cleanse your house of them. You cannot afford to give them shelter: send them packing at once.

Worse than their damaging your house, they are *damaging you.* Bad lodgers will break your windows, burn your shutters, pull down your wainscots, and do a thousand spiteful things. When they will neither pay nor go, they will do all the mischief they can: and thus do vain thoughts—foolish, ineffectual thoughts—work us grievous ill; for the man that resolves and does not carry out the resolve grows in irresolution. He that yesterday said he would, but to-day does not, may to-day say he will, but there will not be so much strength in his resolve as there was in that of yesterday; and he failed yesterday, and he is still more certain to fail now. A man that has been ten years making up his mind to think about eternity is ten degrees less likely to do so. A man who has had ten years' sermons earnestly driven at him, and yet they have not penetrated him, is as one that has been ten years hammered on the anvil, and is just so much the harder. O God, how are men hardened, besotted, befooled, and enslaved by vain thoughts? How long will you let these lodge within you? Shall they remain till they have plundered you of heart and hope, and left your mind a wreck and ruin?

Worst of all, these vain thoughts are bad lodgers because they *bring you under condemnation.* There have been times when to entertain certain persons was treason, and many individuals have been put to death for harbouring traitors. Rebels condemned to die have been discovered in a man's house, and he has been condemned for affording them a hiding-place. Now, God declares that these vain thoughts of yours are condemned traitors. Are you going to harbour them any longer? If a lodger came to your house, and after a while a policeman called and said, "You let your front room, I think?" "Yes." "What kind of a person is your lodger, and what is his business?" I think after one or two visits of that kind you would say to your lodger, "I shall be obliged if you will go somewhere else," for you would not enjoy the idea of having a suspected person within your doors. Nobody does. Now, these vain thoughts, these self-righteous thoughts, these boastings in self, they are something more than suspected: they have been judged, and condemned to die; and, oh, let not your heart become a haunt for things that God abhors: and when he sends a summons, as he does to-night in the words of the text, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" oh, that God would grant you grace to drive out the Canaanites, who will dwell in the land as long as ever they can find a den to hide in. Let Beddome's hymn be your prayer:—

"Astonish'd and distress'd,
I turn mine eyes within:
My heart with loads of guilt oppress'd,
The seat of every sin.

"What crowds of evil thoughts,
What vile affections there!
Envy and pride, deceit and guile,
Distrust and slavish fear.

"Almighty King of saints,
These tyrant lusts subdue;
Drive the old serpent from his seat,
And all my powers renew.

"This done, my cheerful voice
Shall loud hosannas raise;
My soul shall glow with gratitude,
My lips proclaim thy praise."

III. That brings me to my closing head, which is, LET US SEE WHAT TO DO WITH THESE BAD LODGERS.

The first thing is to *give them notice to quit at once.* Let there be no waiting. When a man is converted it is done at once. There may be a long process by which he comes up to it, and there may be a long succession of light-breakings before he gets clear about it; but there is a turning-point. There is a line, thin as a razor's edge, which divides death from life, a point of decision which separates the saved from the lost. Did you ever notice in our Lord's parable of the prodigal son the decision of the repenting one? He said, "I will arise and go unto my father"; and he arose and came to his father, and, as I heard a quaint divine say, he did not give his master a day's notice. The narrative tells us that he had joined himself to a citizen of that country, who had sent him into the fields to feed swine. He ran off there and then, just as he was. If he had gone to see his master and had said, "Sir, I am obliged to go home and see my father," or if he had stopped to clean himself,—if he had stopped to purchase better linen, and a fairer suit of clothes before he went home, he would have died of hunger at the swine-trough. But, instead of that, he did the right thing: he ran for his life directly; and that is what you must do. "Well, I shall, I hope," says one. You never will, my friend, if you get no farther than that. It must be done at once. And, possibly, it is "now or never,"—ere the clock tick again. Wilt thou have Christ, and go to heaven, or thy sins and go to hell? Quick! Sharp! God help thee to answer aright, for on that answer may hang eternal things. I believe that it is always so. Men decide at once, or not at all. It was so with me. I was thinking, as I stood up here to preach, that this is just the kind of weather in which I found the Saviour. Some did not come out that morning, it snowed so hard; but I had a heavy heart, and I wanted to lighten it; and I went out to the place of worship, and when I heard the gospel, and he that preached it said to me, "Look! Look, young man! Look, now!" I did there and then look to Jesus, else had I never looked. When the word came to me, immediately I received it. There is one heavy knock sometimes at a man's door, and he must open then, or no other knock may come. I think that somebody has come in here to-night that in God's name I may give that knock at his heart; and if the door be opened, and he says, "Come in, blessed Saviour," then it shall be well. The first thing, then, is to give notice to quit to all self-righteousness. Away with it! Away with it! What a fool I was ever to have any! All self-confidence—away with it! I had better lean on a broken reed than lean on myself. To all delays—to all hopes that I shall live another week—away with them! Away with them! I have no ground for such hopes. Away with them. Quit, quit, vain thoughts. Oh, that they would go at the bidding!

Suppose that these vain thoughts will not go just when you bid them begone. I will tell you what to do to get rid of them: *starve them out.* Lock the door, and let nothing enter upon which they can feed. I would have you unconverted people say, "We confess that we have fed our vain thoughts, but now we will not go where they can get food. We will not go to ungodly amusements, nor into evil company, nor will we talk with idlers on our way home." Send into your heart what you know vain thoughts cannot be nourished upon, what will be poison to them. Give them God's Word. Read it and study it, and cry to God to have mercy upon you. Do nothing which will help these vain thoughts to live.

I will tell you a secret, and then I have done. The best way in all the world that I know of to get rid of vain thoughts out of your house—these bad lodgers that have gone in and that you cannot get out—is to *sell the house over their heads.* Let the house change owners. When you have done that, you know, it will be the new owner that will have the trouble of turning them out; and he will do it. I recommend every sinner here that wants to find salvation to give himself up to Christ. Come out, you vain thoughts. They will not come out. Notice to quit we give you; and they will not go. Now we will tell them something that will change the nature of the struggle. Lord Jesus, I trust thee to be my Saviour from every form of evil; and I am not my own now, for thou hast bought me with a price. Ah, now the stronger than they are has come, and he will bind the strong ones, and he will fling them out of window, and so break them to pieces with their fall that they shall never be able to crawl up the stairs again. He knows how to do it. He can expel them; you cannot.

Oh, that you might have grace now to give your whole nature to your Creator and Redeemer! Give the house over to a new owner, and let him come, and he will drive them out, and he himself will come and live there, and his divine Spirit will come and fill every chamber with his own presence, and there shall be no fear that these bad lodgers shall ever come back again.

God bless this simple word to many, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—645, 119 (Vers. III.), 515.

Now ready. Price One Penny.

SPURGEON'S ILLUSTRATED ALMANACK for 1881,

CONTAINING

Articles by the Editor and other Writers, Texts of Scripture selected for Meditation for every Day in the Year, Metropolitan Tabernacle Directory, &c.

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

I WAS BEFORE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."—1 Timothy i. 13.

I AM not going to dwell at this time upon the special items of the text as to what Paul was before his conversion, because none of us have been exactly as he was. We have all gone astray like lost sheep, but each one of us has taken a distinct course from all the rest. You might have to describe your trangressions in very different words from those used by the apostle, because yours has been a different form of guilt from his. Paul said of himself that he "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." Saul of Tarsus was a blasphemer. He does not say that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he uses a very strong word, though not too strong, and says that he was a blasphemer. He was a down-right, thorough-going blasphemer, who also caused others to blaspheme. From blasphemy, which is a sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to persecution, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated his people too. He was also injurious, which I think Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser; that eminent critic says "blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the church, and despising was his sin in his own heart." He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ, and thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks, and by doing so injured his own conscience. Having sinned thus grievously Paul makes a full record of his guilt in order that he may magnify the grace which saved even the chief of sinners.

Note here, before we come to the special purpose we have in view, that godly men never think or speak lightly of their sins. When they know that they are forgiven, they repent of their iniquities even more heartily than before. They never infer from the freeness of grace, the lightness of sin, but quite the contrary; and you shall find it as one trait in the character of every true penitent that he is rather inclined to blacken himself than to whitewash his transgressions. He sometimes speaks of himself in terms which others think must be exaggerated,

though to him, and indeed to God, they are simply true. You have probably read biographies of John Bunyan in which the biographer says that Bunyan laboured under a morbid conscientiousness, and accused himself of a degree of sin of which he was not guilty. Exactly so, in the view of the biographer, but not so in the view of John Bunyan, who, startled into sensitiveness of conscience, could not find words strong enough to express all his reprobation of himself. Job said once, "I abhor myself." That is a very strong expression, but, when he saw his own sin in the presence of God, the man of whom the Lord said unto Satan, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil," the man against whom the devil himself could not bring an accusation, yet says that when he saw God, the brightness of the divine holiness made him so conscious of his sin that he exclaimed, "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Those who have seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin by the light of the Holy Spirit, and who have been made truly penitent, are the last persons to speak lightly of evil. They dwell upon their own criminality with many terms to set forth how greatly they have felt it.

We will consider the case of Paul just a minute or two, because it is a type and pattern of the work of God's grace in other believers. He tells us in the sixteenth verse of this chapter, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." He was a model convert, a typical instance of divine longsuffering, a pattern and specimen of all who believe on Christ, and all conversions are to a large extent similar to that which transformed the blaspheming, persecuting, despising Saul of Tarsus into the great apostle of the Gentiles. Now, notice when he is describing his own past life how he dwells upon it with painful minuteness. He is not speaking before God in private, as Job was in the words we have quoted, else I can conceive that he would paint his sin in still darker colours; but he is answering for himself before king Agrippa touching the things of which he had been accused by the Jews, and you will see that he puts his offence against Christ and his church in as strong a light as he very well could. His enemies have no such accusation to bring against him as that which he voluntarily makes against himself.

First, he says in the tenth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which we read just now, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." Those whom he shut up in prison were saints. To imprison the guilty were no fault, but to maltreat and shut up holy men was indeed blameworthy. He confessed that they were saints, saintly persons, but he committed them to prison for that very reason, because they were Christians; and therefore their saintly lives did not protect them from his malice, but made them so much the more objects of his cruel hatred. He says that he hunted the saints; and not merely a few of them, but "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." He lays stress upon the word "many"—not half-a-dozen here and there, but scores and hundreds suffered through him and his persecuting band. He crowded the prisons with the followers of Jesus Christ. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye," saith the Lord of hosts

when addressing captive Zion. One touch of a saint of God injuriously given will be painful to the Lord; how much more, then, when there are many such touches, and when he whose hand has done the evil deed has to confess—"Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." We may be quite sure that he did this because they were Christians, for the ninth verse puts it thus, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It was Jesus of Nazareth he was aiming at, though his blows were directed against his followers. It was because the name of Jesus was named upon these people that they were put in prison. Now, this is no small sin —to persecute holy men, to imprison many of them, and to do so simply because they believed in Jesus Christ. The apostle felt that this put exceeding bitterness into the gall of his transgression: that he had lifted up unholy hands against the members of Christ's body, and through them had wounded their ever-glorious Head. More than this, he did not merely put them in prison, but he says, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." Some persons in prison have had a measure of liberty, as Joseph had, but Saul took care that these believers should be straitly shut up, that they should have no liberty. He put them into the common jails, locked them up, and made their feet fast in the stocks, causing them to suffer even as he and his companion Silas afterwards did in the prison at Philippi.

Continuing the summary of his evil-doings against the servants of the Lord, he says, "I was not content with their imprisonment, but I was eager for their death. When they were put to death, I gave my voice against them; when the Sanhedrim wanted a vote I, young Saul, was there to give my maiden vote against Stephen or any other saint. If the chief priests wanted a knife to cut the Christians' throats with, there was I ready to do the deed; if they needed one who would drag them away to prison and to death, there stood I, the eager messenger, only too glad if I might lay hands upon them, believing that I was thereby doing God service." "Nay," says he," that is not all. I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme." This, indeed, was a very horrible part of Saul's sinfulness. To destroy their bodies was bad enough, but to destroy their souls too—to compel them to blaspheme, to speak evil of that name which they confessed to be their joy and their hope, surely that was the worst form that even persecution could assume. He forced them under torture to abjure the Christ whom their hearts loved. As it were he was not content to kill them, but he must damn them too. "I compelled them to blaspheme." This was a dreadful sin, and Paul mentions it as such. He does not extenuate his crime, nor attempt to find excuses for his conduct; and then he adds, once more, that he did all this wickedness with the greatest possible enthusiasm: "And being exceedingly mad against them," like a raging madman in his fits, like a violent maniac, who cannot be held in— seized with frenzy, tearing right and left, finding no rest unless he could be harrying and worrying the sheep like a bloody wolf, as he was to the sheep of Christ's flock—"being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." He scattered them far and wide, and then sought to get authority that even when they were in exile they might not be beyond his reach. Saul seems to have grown

proficient in the science of persecution, and to have become a very master in the cruel art of crushing the people of God.

We do not learn this from James, or John, or any of the other apostles. Who tells us of all this? Who makes out this long, black catalogue of crimes of which the man who committed them might well be ashamed? Why, Paul himself. It is Paul himself that puts it so; and I would that, in like manner, the worst character you could have, my brother, might come from your own lips. "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips;" but, when there is an accusation that must be made against you, be you the first to make it with tears of repentance before the living God.

I think I have thus, from the example of Paul before Agrippa, justified the expression with which I started, that true penitents do not seek to extenuate or diminish the sin which has been forgiven them, but they own how great it is, and set it forth in all its enormity as it appears before their enlightened eyes.

Now, I want you, dear friends, who know the Lord, to follow me in a very simple way, rather by your emotions than by anything else. I want the text of my sermon to be, "I was." The apostle tells us what he was—what he was before conversion. Now, I want you to think what you were before the grace of God met with you, and changed you. I do not know that I shall help you much to recollect the details of your sin, for almost the last time I stood here I did that when we spoke of Peter from the words—"When he thought thereon, he wept"; but I want you to see seven very profitable inferences which will arise out of an impartial retrospect of your life before conversion.

I. The first, I think, will be that IF WE THINK OF WHAT WE WERE IT WILL EXCITE IN US ADORING GRATITUDE.

Paul was full of gratitude, for he thanked Christ Jesus that he counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. He is so glad of the favour of God that when he comes to the seventeenth verse he must put down his pen while he sings, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." If, then, you and I look back upon what we were before the Lord saved us, we too shall be full of adoring gratitude as we think of even the least of all the favours that he has bestowed upon us. "I am not worthy," said the patriarch Jacob, when he was returning to his country at the command of God,—"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant," and we can each one say the same. Is it not a wonderful thing that you who were—I will not say what, you know what you were, and God knows—that you should be a teacher of others; that you should be permitted to stand up and speak of pardon bought with blood; that you should be allowed to talk of holiness though your lips used to speak of any other theme but that; that you should be allowed to extol the Christ for whom you had no words of praise a little while ago, for whom, indeed, you had only words of contempt and scorn? Paul was astonished to think that *he* was put into the ministry; and when I look back upon my own life before I knew the Lord, I am amazed that ever I should stand here, seeing that for so long I refused

my Lord's love, and put aside his favours, and would have none of them. Ah, I did not know what would happen to me one day. Little did I then think that I should ever stand here to—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found."

But it does fill me with gratitude which makes me bow before God in thankful adoration to think that he should have looked on me, and to know that "unto me," as well as unto Paul, "is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

I ask you, dear friends, to recollect this gratitude in the reception of every blessing. When you enjoy church privileges, when you come to the communion-table, think, "Here comes one to sit with the children of God who once was like a dog outside the house." When you stand up and praise the Lord, think, "And I too am permitted to offer the sacrifice of praise—I, who once sang the praises of Bacchus or of Venus, rather than of Christ Jesus!" When you draw near to God in prayer, and know that he hears you too—when you have power in prayer, and prevail with the Most High, and come back with your hands full of blessings that have been obtained at the throne of grace, you may well say, "What shameful things these hands once did when I rendered my members instruments of unrighteousness; and now they are loaded down with the bounties of a gracious God!" Oh, do bless his name! If you do not, the stones in the street will begin to cry out against some of you. Oh, if your heart does not leap at the very sound of the name of Jesus, surely you cannot possess a heart at all. Such a change, such a wondrous, matchless change, has passed upon you that if you do not praise the Lord to-day, and to-morrow, and as long as you have any being, what shall be said of your ungrateful silence? "I was,"—I was before,—all that I ought not to have been, but grace has changed me, and unto the God of grace be all the glory. Do not all of you who love the Lord unite with me in this utterance of adoring gratitude?

II. A second very blessed inference (we can only speak briefly upon each one) is that A SENSE OF WHAT WE WERE SHOULD SUSTAIN IN US VERY DEEP HUMILITY.

It did so in the case of the apostle Paul; and I would refer you to his expression of it in the first epistle to the Corinthians, the fifteenth chapter, and the ninth verse, where he says, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." When he was compelled to glory in what he was through the grace given unto him he said that he supposed he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles; yet he here says of himself that he was not worthy to be called an apostle, because before his conversion he persecuted the saints of God. Now, dear brothers and sisters, if we have been a little while converted, and have united with the church of God, and the Lord has given us a little work to do, we may be tempted to think, "Now, I am somebody. Really, I am not now quite the humble dependent that I used to be; I am getting to be of some service to my Lord and Master, and I am of some importance in his church." Ah, that is the way many Christians get into sad

mischief. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." You must always strive against that kind of spirit, and one way to avoid it is to remember what you were in your unregenerate state. There are some who might say, "I am a minister of the gospel, but I am not worthy to be called a minister, because of the sins that I committed before my conversion. I am a member of the church of Christ, but I am scarcely worthy to be called a member, because I was before a blasphemer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or profane, unchaste, or dishonest." Recollect what you were, and let your spiritual advancements never lead you to unspiritual pride and self-conceit, for "every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." I have heard of a good man in Germany who used to rescue poor, destitute boys from the streets, and he always had them photographed in their rags and filth just as he found them; and then in years afterwards, when they were clothed and washed and educated, and their characters began to develope, if they grew proud he would show them what they were, and try to teach them what they would have been likely to be if it had not been for his charity. If you are inclined to lift up your head, and boast what a great man you are now, just look at the likeness of what you were before the Lord made you a new creature in Christ Jesus. Oh, who can tell what that likeness would have been but for the interpositions of divine grace? I think you would say what the Scotchman said to Rowland Hill when he called to see the good man in his study. He sat and looked at him, and Rowland Hill's face, you know, if you have seen his portrait, is one to be remembered; there is a peculiar comic look about it. So the Scotchman said, in answer to the question, "What are you looking at?" "I have been studying the lines of your face." "And what do you make out of them?" said Mr. Hill. "Why, that if the grace of God had not made you a Christian, you would have been one of the worst fellows that ever lived." "Ah!" said Mr. Hill, "and you have hit the mark this time." I should not wonder too, if some of us, when we look in the glass, were to see somebody there that would have been a very deep-dyed sinner if it had not been for the change of heart which sovereign grace has wrought. This ought to keep us very humble, and very lowly before God. I invite you, friends, to think this over, and when you feel yourselves beginning to swell a little, let the bladder of your foolish and wicked pride be pricked with the needle of conscience as you recollect what you used to be, and you will be all the better for letting some of the gas escape. Come back as speedily as you can to your true shape, for what are you, after all? If you are anything that is good, or right, or pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, still you must say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

"All that I *was*, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all mine own;
All that I *am*, I owe to thee,
My gracious God, alone.

"The evil of my former state
Was mine, and only mine;
The good in which I now rejoice
Is thine, and only thine."

307. NOVEMBER 30, 1880. Price 6d.

THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONTAINING

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

CONTENTS.

No. 1,565.—MASCHIL OF ETHAN.
1,566.—CHEER FOR THE WORKER, AND HOPE FOR LONDON.
1,567.—THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT.
1,568.—THE BELIEVER CATECHIZED.
1,569.—THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS.

LONDON :

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings,

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS of Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, with Life, 1/-

who had a measure of respect for him: this was Simon, who desired him to eat with him; but when he entered in, Simon treated him as a common guest, and offered him none of the delicate attentions which men give to choice friends, or to superiors. Christ took no note of this, nor had he need to do so, for there was another who stole into that room who did for him all that Simon ought to have done, and more than Simon could have done. "A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping." She stood behind the couch upon which he was reclining, and let her tears fall down upon his blessed flesh till she had washed his feet with them, and then unbraiding the luxurious tresses of her hair, she wiped those holy feet with it; her love, her humility, her adoration, and her penitence mingling as she kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment which she had brought. Our Lord explained why this woman had performed this extraordinary action. He said it was because she had been forgiven much. Now, rest assured that this is a rule without an exception, that those who are conscious of having had much forgiven are those who will love Christ much. I do not say—I almost wish I could—that love is always in proportion to the amount of sin forgiven; but I do say that it is in proportion to the consciousness of sin forgiven. A man may be a less sinner than another, but he may be more conscious of his sin, and he will be the man who will love Christ most. Oh, do not forget what you were, lest you should become unmindful of your obligation to Jesus. You are saints now, but you were not always so. You can talk to others of Christ now, but you could not once have done it. You can wrestle with the angel in prayer and prevail now, but once you were more familiar with the devil than you were with the angel. At this moment your heart bears witness to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost: it is not long ago that the prince of the power of the air wrought within you, and the Holy Spirit was not there at all. I beseech you, therefore, forget not this, lest you forget to love him who has wrought this wondrous change in you. I think there is nothing better than to retain a vivid sense of conversion in order to retain a vivid sense of love. Do not be afraid of loving Christ too much. I see the cold carping criticism of this age objects to any expressions of love to Christ which we use in our hymns because it says that they are sensuous. My only answer to such talk is—God give us more of such blessed sensuousness! I think that instead of diminishing these utterances it will be a token of growth in grace when they are more abundant, not if they become so common as to be hypocritical; then they would be sickening; but as long as they are true and honest, I for one would say to you who love the Lord, go on and sing—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast."

Go on and sing—

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to mine ear."

Hesitate not to say—

"Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of thee";

and if it shall please you, and the Spirit shall move you, even say, like the spouse in the song, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." The starveling religion of the present day, not content with tearing away the doctrinal flesh from the spiritual body, is now seeking to drag out the very heart of religion, and to reduce Christian experience to nothing but a chilly doubting of everything. Let this be far from you. Believe something, and love something, for to believe is to live, but to love is to be in health. Oh for more love arising out of a deep, intense sense of what we once were, and of the change which Christ has wrought in us! "But," says one, "I do not know that any great change has been wrought in me." No, and there are some who tell us that we do not want any. There are certain Pædobaptists preaching nowadays that the most of children of pious parents do not need conversion. We have long had the Church of England teaching us baptismal regeneration; now we have got some Nonconformists trying to persuade us that no regeneration at all is wanted. This a new kind of doctrine that I know nothing of, and that the word of God knows nothing of, and it will not do for us. It will eat out the very life of Christianity if it be believed. Pious ancestors could not save one of you—even if your fathers and mothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers, and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers, and great-great-great-great-grandfathers and great-great-great-great-grandmothers, as far back as ever you like, had been all saints, nevertheless, their faith could not avail for you. You must be born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Ye must be born again" is as true of one child as of another; as true of you as it was of me, and as true of me as of the thief confined in prison to-day. But some of us have been changed, we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. It has been a real work of grace, the turning of us upside down, the reversing of the course of nature, a turning of night into day, a turning of the powers of our spirit from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of Christ; and we must and will therefore love him who has wrought in us such a wondrous transformation.

V. Well now, fifthly, REMEMBERING WHAT WE WERE, ARDENT ZEAL SHOULD BE AROUSED IN US.

Look at Paul. He says, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." What then? Why, now that he has become a follower of Christ, he cannot do too much. He put many saints in prison: now he goes into many prisons himself. He hunted them even to strange cities: and now he goes into all manner of strange cities himself. He dragged them before tribunals: and now he himself goes and stands before Roman proconsuls, and before the Roman emperor himself. Paul can never do too much for Christ, because he has done so much for the devil. I remember one who lived four or five miles away from a place of worship, who used to say, "You old legs, it is no use being tired; for you have got to carry me. You used to take me to the place of amusement when I served the devil, and you shall carry me now to the house of God, that I may worship and serve him." When sometimes he had an uneasy seat, he used to say, "It is no use grumbling, old bones, you will have to sit here, or else you will have to stand. Years

All Advertisements for the Sermon Parts should be sent to Hollings & Brock, 22, Paternoster Row, London.

IMPORTANT NOTIC

500,000 SAMPLE PACKET

(Each sufficient to make a Cup) of this

CHOCOLATE POWDE

TRADE MARK

Were Given Away at the

International Exhibition of 1862,

And Thousands are now using it, pronouncing it to be t equalled in quality and excellence.

It is Recommended by the Faculty, Daily.

One Cup or Twenty made in One Minut

MILK OR SUGAR NOT REQUIRED.

Sold by all Grocers, One Shilling per Pound.

By Her Majesty's Royal Letters Patent.

Commercial Steam Mills, Londo

Established 1812.

LAMPLOUGH'S EFFERVESCING

PYRETIC SALINE

Is found pre-eminently beneficial in preventing and curing **SMALL POX**, by Purifying, Invigorating, and Vitalising the Blood. Any person who has already this complaint should take it and be kept in a cool and darkened room, to prevent its leaving any trace on the features.

SICKNESS, HEADACHE, and NAUSEA, are in most cases immediately relieved by taking a teaspoonful in a tumbler of cold water. It is a certain remedy in two hours if needful.

SEA VOYAGES.—For every valuable accompaniment, and should be taken on board in quantity. It must always be the sea or bilious sickness.

For BILIOUS CONSTITUTIONS, good service to vitiated secretions, Indigestion, and Eruption on the Skin, it should be taken every morning with breakfast or dinner, in a tumbler of water, and the same quantity at bed-time. May be obtained of the Proprietor,

H. LAMPLOUGH, Consulting Chemist, 113, Holborn, E.C.

Sold by Lamplough Hatton Garden, London, and of all respectable Chemists.

SMITH'S TASTELESS DANDELION ANTIBILIOUS PILL

price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per box, have been for 22 years a most successful substitute for Calomel. For all disorders of the stomach and liver—free the skin of humours, and purify the blood—they are unequalled, never cause pain, may be taken at all times by either sex, and regulate the bowels with comfort and safety. *They greatly aid in change of life.*

Sole maker, W. S. SMITH, M.P.S., 281, Walworth Road, and 281, Brixton Road, and proprietor of Bowyer's Corn Plaster and Chilblain Plasters, who will send a box of either, free by post, for 15 or 30 stamps. To be had of all Chemists.

BORWICK'S BAKING POWDER

HAS BEEN AWARDED

FOUR GOLD MEDAL

For [illegible] over all others. Manufactory [illegible] London. Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c., throughout the World. To avoid disappointment see that each Canister bears the name of BORWICK'S BAKING POWDER.

CLARKE'S WORLD FAMED BLOOD MIXTURE

Is warranted to cleanse the blood from all impurities from whatever cause arising. For Scrofula, Scurvy, Sores of all kinds, Skin and Blood Diseases, its effects are marvellous. Thousands of Testimonials from all parts. In bottles 2s. 6d. each, and in cases of six times the quantity, 11s. each, of all chemists. Sent to any address for 30 or 132 stamps by the Proprietor,

F. J. CLARKE,

Chemist, Apothecaries' Hall, Lincoln. London Depot 150, Oxford Street.

Now, from this moment never indulge the idea that it is useless to attempt to benefit any of your fellow-men. I recollect—indeed, I have often met with the circumstance of persons saying, "Why did you not ask So-and-so to attend a place of worship?" "Ask him? Oh, I never thought of him." "Why not?" "I did not think it was any use." It is a very singular thing that those are the kind of people who, if you do get them to hear the word, are generally converted—the people you think it is no use to bring. Men who have been accustomed to speak very disrespectfully of religious things when once brought under the sound of the truth are often the first to receive a blessing. Those are the kind of fellows to try at, for there is some hope of reaching men who are in such need of the gospel we have to proclaim as they are. You know there is virgin soil there, so it is the very place to sow the good seed of the kingdom. There is good fishing in a pond that never was fished in before: and here is a man who at any rate is not gospel-hardened: he has not got used to the sound of the word, so as to take no notice of anything that is said. Bring him in; he is the very man we want: bring him in. "But he is a swearer." Well, but if you were a swearer before your conversion, you ought never to say anything about that. "Oh, but he is a very hardened man." Yes; but if you were converted, notwithstanding what you were, you ought never to make that objection against anyone. "Oh, but he is such a low-bred man." Well, there are plenty of us who cannot boast much about our aristocratic descent. "Oh, but," says one, "he is such a proud man, such a haughty man:" or, "he is a rich man; he is a purse-proud man." Yes, but there are others like him who have been brought in; and while that man has sinned in one way you have sinned in another way; and if the grace of God met your six it can meet his half-dozen. Depend upon it, God meant us to be hopeful about other people when he saved us. See that man coming out of the hospital. He has had pretty nearly all the diseases you ever heard of, and yet he has been cured. He is not the man to say, "It is no use going in there, you will get no good by putting yourself under the treatment of that doctor": on the contrary, whenever he meets with anybody who is suffering, he says, "You go and try the physician that healed me. If you can get a bed under his care, if you can come under his notice, you are almost certain to get cured, your maladies cannot be worse than mine, and he met my case exactly, and he can meet yours." He is the man who will advertise Christ, and will proclaim his fame the whole world over—who has tasted that he is gracious, and has proved in his own case the converting power of the Holy Ghost. Oh, I pray you, dear friend, despair of nobody. You who go with your tracts, go into the worst houses; you who talk in the workhouses to those who are, perhaps, as far gone as any—who find them dying in the infirmary, and rejecting the word as you speak it, yet keep on; keep on. "Never say die" concerning any. Since the Lord has saved you the grace of God can save anybody, however far he may have sunk in sin; it can reach even to the very vilest of the sons of men.

VII. The last inference is, that WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US SHOULD CONFIRM OUR CONFIDENCE FOR OURSELVES—our confidence, not in ourselves, but in God, who will perfect that which he has begun in us. There

is not half as much grace necessary to bring you to heaven if you are a believer as you have had already to bring you where you are. You have got to be perfected; but remember that it was the very first step that had the difficulty in it. It always reminds me of the legend of St. Denis, who picked up his head after it was cut off, and walked, I think, forty leagues with it. But a wit said that there was no trouble about walking forty leagues: the difficulty all lay in the first step. So it did; and so all the difficulty of the walk of faith lies in the first step—that first coming of a dead heart into life, that first bringing of a reprobate soul, a carnal mind that is enmity against God, into friendship with God. Well, that has been done; that first great work has been wrought in you by God the Holy Ghost; and now you can say with the apostle, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Do you think the Lord ever converts a man with a view of showing him the light that he may go back again into the thick darkness for ever? Does he drop a spark of heavenly light into our souls that it may go out never to be rekindled? Does he come and teach us to eat heavenly bread, and drink the water of life, and then leave us to starvation or die of thirst? Does he make us members of Christ's body, and then allow us to rot and decay? Has he brought us thus far to put us to shame? Has he given me a heart that cries after him, and pines for him; has he given me a sighing after perfection, an inward hunger after everything that is holy and true; and does he mean, after all, to desert me? It cannot be:—

> "His love in time past forbids me to think
> He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
> That gracious conversion I have in review,
> Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

So let us go on our way rejoicing that it shall be even so with each one of us. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xxvi. and 1 Timothy i. 11—17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 233, 235.

END OF VOLUME XXVI.

ROYAL LIVER FRIENDLY SOCIETY.

Chief Office—16, PRESCOT STREET, LIVERPOOL.

London Offices—43, FINSBURY SQUARE, and 47 & 49, NEWINGTON BUTTS,
(Opposite Metropolitan Tabernacle.)

Accumulated Capital - £629,478 13s. 7d.

THIS SOCIETY IS THE LARGEST OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD, having paid in Claims and Grants since its formation upwards of **Two Millions Sterling,** and having Agencies established in every part of the United Kingdom. The question of

NATIONAL THRIFT

is a wide and inexhaustible one, but it cannot be denied that **Insurance** is the primary step for the attainment of this much desired object.

Insurances effected from one day to 80 years of age.

AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF COLLECTORS & CANVASSERS WANTED.

For Terms, Prospectuses, and all Particulars, apply at the Offices, between Ten and Four.

CARWARDINE & COMPY.

MILLERS,

34, CITY ROAD, AND MARDOCKS, HERTS.

PRIZE MEDAL FOR SUPERIOR FLOUR.

FLOUR and WHEAT MEAL of most Excellent Quality delivered carriage free to any Railway Station in London.

Superfine	56 lbs. 10/8	Households	9/4
Whites	56 lbs. 10/-	Seconds	8/8

Wheat Meal for Brown Bread, fine and coarse, ground and granulated, 56-lbs 8/8, 14-lbs. 2/3.

Half Sacks and upwards carriage paid to any railway station within 100 miles.

Sold by all Chemists.

and Stationers.

Bottles, 6d., 1/-, 2/6.

THE BEST AND MOST PERFECT MARKING INK IS

HOOPER'S.

It gives a permanent Black Impression, and never washes out.

Messrs. THRESHER & GLENNY, Hosiers to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, say:—"We have used **Hooper's Marking Ink** for many years, and find no other gives us so great satisfaction."

A LADY, writing from Hampshire, says:—Kindly send me some Marking Ink, such as you supply Messrs. Swan & Wells, of Regent Street, for I have observed that the Ink they use is most excellent."

PLEASE ASK FOR HOOPER'S, AND HAVE NO OTHER.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

500,000 SAMPLE PACKETS

(Each sufficient to make a Cup) of this

CHOCOLATE POWDER

TRADE MARK

Were Given Away at the

International Exhibition of 1862,

And Thousands are now using it, pronouncing it to be unequalled in quality and excellence.

It is Recommended by the Faculty, Daily.

One Cup or Twenty made in One Minute.

MILK OR SUGAR NOT REQUIRED.

Sold by all Grocers, One Shilling per Pound.

By Her Majesty's Royal Letters Patent,

Commercial Steam Mills, London.

Established 1812.

LAMPLOUGH'S EFFERVESCING

PYRETIC SALINE

Is found pre-eminently beneficial in preventing and curing **SMALL POX**, by Purifying, Invigorating, and Vitalising the Blood. Any person who has already this complaint should take it and be kept in a cool and darkened room, to prevent its leaving any trace on the features.

SICKNESS, HEADACHE, and NAUSEA, are in most cases immediately relieved by taking a teaspoonful in a tumbler of cold [illegible] be repeated once or twice in two hours, if needful.

SEA VOYAGES.—It is a very valuable accompaniment, and [illegible] It instantly allays the sea or bilious sickness.

[illegible] IONS, giving rise to vitiated secretions, Indigestion, and Eruptions [illegible] be taken daily with the dinner, in a tumbler of water, and the same quantity on going to [illegible]

May be obtained of the Proprietor,

H. LAMPLOUGH, Consulting Chemist, 113, Holborn, E.C.,

Second Door from Hatton Garden, London, and of all respectable Chemists.

FRAMPTON'S PILL OF HEALTH.

THIS FAMILY MEDICINE is the most effective remedy for indigestion, bilious and liver complaints.

For FEMALES these Pills are truly excellent, removing headache, depression of spirits, dulness of sight, nervous affections, blotches, pimples, and sallowness of the skin, and giving a healthy bloom to the complexion. Sold by all Chemists, at 1s. 1½d. and 2s 9d. per box.

BORWICK'S GOLD MEDAL BAKING POWDER.

Has been awarded FOUR GOLD MEDALS for its superiority over all others. Makes Delicious Bread, Plum Puddings, and all kinds of Pastry light, sweet, and digestible. Sold everywhere in 1d., 2d., 4d., and 6d. packets, and 6d., 1s., 2s. 6d., and 5s. boxes.

Schools, Families, and Hotels should purchase the 2s. 6d. or 5s. size, as there is a considerable saving.

For the Nursery, the Sickroom, and the Family Table,

BROWN & POLSON'S CORN FLOUR

HAS BECOME A WORLD-WIDE NECESSARY.

THE QUIVER, *for SUNDAY READING.*

NOW READY, price *6d.*,

THE QUIVER *for January,*

CONTAINING—

1. **Restful Thoughts for Busy People.** Guidance in the Way. By the Rev. W. BOYD CARPENTER, M.A.
2. **The Spread of the Kingdom.—Three Centuries of English Mission Labour throughout the World.**
3. **The Family Council: Conversations on the Events of Home.** III. The Boy's Start in Life. By EDWARD GARRETT.
4. **Witnesses for Christ in the World's Work.** By the Rev. ROBERT SHINDLER.
5. **The "Beginnings" of Scripture.—I. The Beginning of Wisdom.** By the Rev. J. STUART.
6. **A "Village Home" and its Inmates.**
7. **A Robin Dinner in Gray's Yard.** By ANNE BEALE.
8. **An Evening Meditation.** A Poem.
9. **"Ring Out, ye Crystal Spheres!"** Music by JAMES TAYLOR, B.Mus., Organist to the University of Oxford.
10. **Lessons of the Snow.** By the Rev. W. WALTERS, Birmingham.
11. **Stumpy's Mission.**—In Two Parts. Part I.
12. **Missionaries in India.** By an INDIAN OFFICER.
13. **Bible Lessons for School and Home.**
14. **Archbishop Ussher: a Ter-centenary Commemoration.—In** Two Chapters. Chapter I. By the Rev. G. A. CHADWICK, D.D.
15. **Faith.** A Poem by the Rev. J. H. DAVIES, B.A.
16. **"Praise the Lord."** Psalm CL. Paraphrased. By MARTIN F. TUPPER, D.C.L.
17. **The Christmas Bells.**
18. **Short Arrows.**—The "Look-up" Legion—Railway Employés in Burmah—The Mildmay Mission—The First Christian Baptism in Japan—The "Sea-Shell" Mission.
19. **"The Quiver" Bible Class.**
20. **Jewels from the Scripture Mine.** Jewels for the Seekers after God.

Frontispiece—**"An Evening Meditation."**

SERIAL STORIES.

IN VANITY AND VEXATION: A North-Country Story. By LOUISA CROW, Author of "Lost in the Winning," &c.

BERTIE AND I: A Home Story.

N.B.—The NOVEMBER *and* DECEMBER *Parts of* **THE QUIVER,** *price 6d. each, forming the* FIRST TWO PARTS *of the* NEW VOLUME *for* 1881, *are on Sale at all Booksellers'.*

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., Ludgate Hill, London.

2

10,000 PRESENTS.

MODERATE PRICES. MODERATE PRICES.

PARKINS & GOTT

24.25.27.& 28. OXFORD S[T]

PORTRAIT ALBUMS OF THE NEW MA
will last for years, from 5s.

WRITING CASES of every kind (a choice of 1,0

DRESSING BAGS for Ladies and Gentlemen, fitted, from

DRESSING CASES from 15s. to £10.

LADIES' DRESSING CASE

Elegant ENVELOPE CASES, 18s.
Ditto BLOTTING BOOKS, 10s. 6d.
TEA CADDIES, 10s. 6d. to 3 Guineas.
Elegant RETICULES, 10s. 6d.
GLOVE BOXES, 8s. 6d., 12s. 6d. & 21s.
HANDKERCHIEF BOXES, 9s. 6d.
SCRAP BOOKS AND ALBUMS.
CARD TRAYS, in China, &c., 10s. 6d.
CARD CASES. CIGAR CASES.
INKSTANDS, Mounted, 10s. 6d.

BOOK SLIDES.
WORK BOXES, 7s. 6d. to 2 Guine
WORK BASKETS, 5s. 6d.
STATIONERY CABINETS, 21s.
DESPATCH BOXES, 21s. to 5 Gu
POCKET BOOKS. PENCIL CASE
PURSES, 1s. to 40s. FANS.
SCENT CASES of 2 and 4 Bottles
OPERA GLASSES, 7s. 6d. to 3 Gu
SMELLING BOTTLES, 2s. 6d. to

ORNAMENTAL ARTICLES.

In Gilt, Bronze, & China, for Mantelshelf & Table.

JEWEL CASES, 8s. 6d.
TRINKET BOXES, 8s. 6d.
IVORY BRUSHES.
SETS of SCISSORS in CASES.
LADIES' COMPANIONS.
PRESENTS FOR CLERGYMEN.

POSTAGE SCALES.
DESKS FOR BOYS, 8s. 6d.
LADIES' HAND BAGS, 3s. 9d.
MUSICAL BOXES.
GIRLS' DESKS AND WORK BOX
LIQUEUR CASES.

SILVER JEWELLERY, BRACELETS, LOCKETS, BROOCHES, EARRING

WATCHES & CLOCKS (WALTHAM WATCHES

CHILDREN'S & OTHER GIFT BOOKS, 1/- TO 2

BAGATELLE BOARDS, 28s. 6d., 50s., and 58s.

With Balls, Cues, &c., sent, Carriage paid, to any Station upon prepayment.

BACKGAMMON, BESIQUE, CHESS, DRAUGHTS, AND EV
KIND OF IN-DOOR GAMES.

Family and Pocket Bibles, for Presents, very che

PRESENTS FOR BOYS. PRESENTS FOR GIR

WRITING CASES, DRESSING CASES, WORK BOXES, &c., ARRANGED AND MANUFACTURED.

RCULATION OF NEARLY THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND.
Post free for Five Stamps.

)NSUMPTION OF THE LUNGS,
OR DECLINE:

Tature, Causes, Symptoms, Progress, and Successful Treatment, ing that formidable disease to be curable in all its Stages; With ıpters on ASTHMA, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, COUGHS, &c., by

GEO. THOS. CONGREVE,
COOMBE LODGE, PECKHAM, LONDON, S.E.

following is an Extract from the "CHRISTIAN HERALD" (Edited by Rev. M. BAXTER). August 25th, 1880.

ttention has been called to a pamphlet on the treatment of this terrible malady, and on Asthma ases of the lungs in general, by Mr. Geo. Thos. Congreve, of Coombe Lodge, Peckham—a n gentleman, well known to most of our leading ministers, *Mr. Spurgeon* among the rest, who ent meeting spoke very highly of him, stating that many members of his Church and students of re had consulted him with remarkable success. One instance in Mr. Congreve's work deserving notice is that of Rev. Jas. Smith, formerly of the College, who was restored after the case had nounced hopeless. Other extraordinary cases are related by Mr. Spurgeon's first student (Rev. ledhurst, of Portsmouth), and many more from ministers too numerous to mention.

author has studied the subject for many years, both at the London Hospitals and with his and in a private sphere of observation, enlarging year by year. We are glad to hear of his con- uccess, and confidently recommend a perusal of the work. . . . . .

dy at Tunbridge Wells, whose name and full address may be obtained from Mr. Congreve, May 29th, 1880, says:—'Your treatment of Consumption has been the means not only of *saving* but of *restoring me to vigorous health*. I am glad to use every opportunity of commending it ls suffering with the same disease.'

following is from Rev. John S. Alsop, Pastor of Zion Chapel, Burton-on-Trent:—

"64, Branstone Road, May 22nd, 1880.

ar Sir,—I have found the four bottles of medicine very useful. One case is that of a young very poor, to whom I gave it. She is now so much better that she can work, and come to *The change is wonderful!* Now, will you send me four more on the same low terms, for the rpose? If you think it worth while to use my letter, do so.'

Rev. W. B. Booth, of the East End Christian Mission, writes:—'I am thankful to tell you that al cases medicine had from you has been extremely beneficial, especially so in the case of one of ile evangelists.' We are glad to say that

Mr. Congreve's remedies are not expensive in any case."

L. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE,
THE ORIGINAL AND ONLY GENUINE.

CE TO INVALIDS.—If you wish to obtain quiet refreshing sleep, free from headache, relief m pain and anguish, to calm and assuage the weary achings of protracted disease, invigorate ous media, and regulate the circulating systems of the body, you will provide yourself with rvellous remedy discovered by Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE, Member of the College of ns, London, to which he gave the name of

LORODYNE

And which is admitted by the Profession to be the most wonderful and valuable remedy ever discovered.
Is the best remedy known for Coughs, Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma.
effectually checks and arrests those too often fatal diseases—Diphtheria, Fever, Croup, Ague.
acts like a charm in diarrhœa, and is the only specific in Cholera and Dysentery.
effectually cuts short all attacks of Epilepsy, Hysteria, Palpitation and Spasms.
Is the only palliative in Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Gout, Cancer, Toothache, Meningitis, &c.

From Dr. B. J. BOULTON & Co., Hornecastle:

have made pretty extensive use of Chlorodyne in our practice lately, and look upon it as lent direct Sedative and Anti-spasmodic. It seems to allay pain and irritation in whatever id from whatever cause. It induces a feeling of comfort and quietude not obtainable by r remedy, and it seems to possess this great advantage over all other Sedatives, that it unpleasant after-effects.

Russell communicated to the College of Physicians that he had received a dispatch from esty's Consul at Manilla, to the effect that Cholera had been raging fearfully, and that the eedy of any service was CHLORODYNE.—See *Lancet*, December 31, 1864.

TION—BEWARE OF PIRACY AND IMITATIONS.—CAUTION—Vice-Chancellor Sir W. od stated that Dr. J. Collis Browne was undoubtedly the Inventor of Chlorodyne; that the the defendant, Freeman, was deliberately untrue, which, he regretted to say, had been —See *Times*, July 13, 1864.

in Bottles at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d. and 4s. 6d. None genuine without the words, "Dr. J. COLLIS E'S CHLORODYNE," on the Government Stamp. Overwhelming Medical Testimony nies each bottle.

le Manufacturer: **J. T. Davenport, 33, Great Russell Street, London.**

EIGHT PRIZE MEDALS.

BRYANT & MAY'S

TRADE MARK

MATCHES.

EIGHT PRIZE MEDALS.

THE NEW FAMILY MATCH SAFE for Bryant & May's Patent Safety Matches, supplies a want that has long been felt, and will be adopted at once by all careful housekeepers. It is very ornamental, and made to contain three dozen boxes of Bryant & May's Patent Safety Matches and three of the ornamental metal match cases, and can be obtained from any grocer or oilman, filled & fitted complete, for 2/6. It is strong, & damp proof, & should be found in every store room.

ENO'S FRUIT SALT.

As a Health-giving, Refreshing, Cooling, and Invigorating Beverage. Or as a gentle Laxative and Tonic in the various forms of Indigestion.

Use ENO'S FRUIT SALT.

Prepared from Sound Ripe Fruit.

"After suffering for nearly two and a half years from severe headache and disordered stomach, and after trying almost everything and spending much money without finding any benefit, I was recommended by a friend to try your Fruit Salt, and before I had finished one bottle I found it doing me a great deal of good, and now I am restored to my usual health; and others that I know that have tried it have not enjoyed such good health for years.—Yours most truly,

"Post Office, Barrasford." "ROBERT HUMPHREYS."

ENO'S FRUIT SALT allays nervous excitement and the injurious effects of stimulants and too rich food (by natural means). Its power in aiding digestion is most striking. In the nursery it is beyond praise.

Prepared by J. C. ENO, FRUIT SALT WORKS, HATCHAM, S.E.

EPPS'S

Product of a special refining process. It is Chocolate devoided of its over-richness and substantiality. Sugarless, and, when made, of the consistence of coffee.

CHOCOLATE

n afternoon Chocolate. Each packet is labelled JAMES EPPS & Co., Homœopathic Chemists, London.

ESSENCE.

99. MARCH 31, 1880. Price 6

THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONTAINING

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

CONTENTS

No. 1,524.—YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION.
1,525.—THE LILY AMONG THORNS.
1,526.—THE FAIR PORTRAIT OF A SAINT.
1,527.—PERFECT SANCTIFICATION.
1,528.—"THEY WERE TEMPTED."

LONDON:

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings,

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

500,000 SAMPLE PACKETS

(Each sufficient to make a Cup) of this

CHOCOLATE POWDER

Were Given Away at the

International Exhibition of 1862,

And Thousands are now using it, pronouncing it to be unequalled in quality and excellence.

It is **Recommended by the Faculty, Daily.**

One Cup or Twenty made in One Minute.

MILK OR SUGAR NOT REQUIRED.

Sold by all Grocers, One Shilling per Pound.

By Her Majesty's Royal Letters Patent.

Commercial Steam Mills, London.

Established 1812.

LAMPLOUGH'S EFFERVESCING

PYRETIC SALINE

Is found pre-eminently beneficial in preventing and curing **SMALL POX**, by Purifying, Invigorating, and Vitalising the Blood. Any person who has already this complaint should take it and be kept in a cool and darkened room, to prevent its leaving any trace on the features.

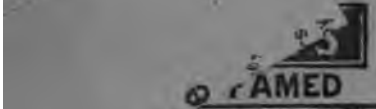
SICKNESS, HEADACHE, and NAUSEA, are in most cases immediately relieved by taking a teaspoonful in a tumbler of cold water. This can be repeated once or twice in two hours, if needful.

SEA [illegible]TAGES.—It is a very valuable accompaniment, and should on no account [illegible]ed. It instantly allays the sea or bilious sickness.

For BILIOU[illegible]TIONS, giving rise to vitiated secretions, Indigestion, and Eruptions on the Skin, a [illegible]d be taken daily with the dinner, in a tumbler of water, and the same quantity o[illegible] May be obtained of the Proprietor.

Consulting Chemist, 113, Holborn, E.C.,

on Garden, London, and of all respectable Chemists.



Is warranted to cleanse the blood from all impurities from whatever cause arising. For Scrofula, Scurvy, Sores of all kinds, Skin and Blood Diseases, its effects are marvellous. Thousands of Testimonials from all parts. In bottles 2s. 6d. each, and in cases of six times the quantity, 11s. each, of all chemists. Sent to any address for 30 or 132 stamps by the Proprietor,

F. J. CLARKE,

Chemist, Apothecaries' Hall, Lincoln. London Depot, 150, Oxford Street.

BORWICK'S BAKING POWDER

HAS BEEN AWARDED

FOUR GOLD MEDALS

For its superiority over all others. Makes delicious Bread and all kinds of Pastry light and digestible. Sold everywhere by Grocers, Oilmen, &c., in 1d., 2d., 4d., and 6d. packets, and 8d., 1s., 2s. 6d., and 5s. boxes. 700,000 packages sold weekly.

Nursery, the Sickroom, and the Family Table,

BROWN & POLSON'S CORN FLOUR

HAS BECOME A WORLD-WIDE NECESSARY.

0. APRIL 30, 1880. Price 6d.

THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONTAINING

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

CONTENTS

No. 1,529.—A POWERFUL REASON FOR COMING TO CHRIST.
1,530.—FOLLOWING THE RISEN CHRIST.
1,531.—ON WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU?
1,532.—THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION.
1,533.—FEAR NOT.

LONDON:

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings,

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

...PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS of Rev. C. H. SPURGEON with Life 1/-